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JOHN MILTON

AN ESSAY

BY

LORD MACAULAY.

EDITED

*WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY*

J. H. FLATHER, M.A.

OF EMMANUEL COLLEGE.

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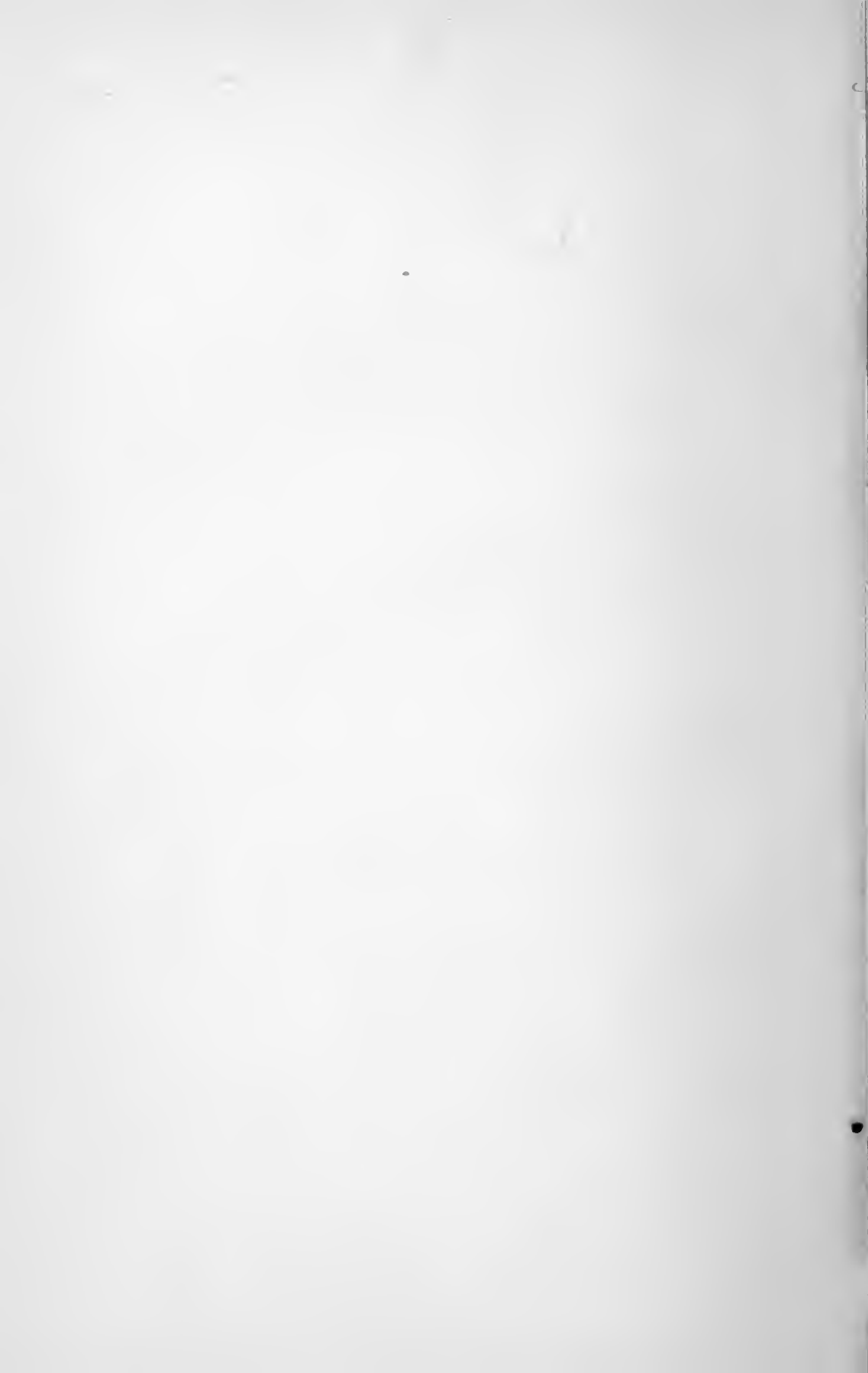


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## INTRODUCTION.

### I. LIFE OF LORD MACAULAY.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY was born in 1800. His father, Zachary Macaulay, was a London merchant and an active member of the band of philanthropists who devoted themselves to securing the abolition of the slave-trade. Thomas, from the time that he was three years old, was an incessant reader, devouring with the greatest interest every book that came within his reach, and he had an extraordinary power of remembering for life every word that he read. At the age of 18 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge. For evidence of the wideness of his reading while he was at the University we need only turn to the pages of the *Essay on Milton*; he was chiefly occupied however with the study of the classics, which was rewarded by his gaining the Craven University Scholarship in 1821. In the same year, while spending the Long Vacation in Wales, he writes 'As to books, for want of any other English literature, I intend to learn *Paradise Lost* by heart at odd moments.' This intention he doubtless carried out, and in the following essay his quotations from Milton (not always verbally correct) were made from memory<sup>1</sup>. In 1824 he was elected a Fellow

<sup>1</sup> In 1849 when he was crossing the Irish Sea by night, 'As I could not read, I used an excellent substitute for reading. I went through *Paradise Lost* in my head. I could still repeat half of it, and that the best half.'

of Trinity College. He had already begun to contribute articles to Knight's *Quarterly Magazine*; one of these articles, the *Criticism on Dante*, contains a comparison of Dante and Milton, which should be contrasted with the comparison given in the following essay. While he was an undergraduate, he had been converted from the Tory views of his family by his friend Charles Austin, and he left college 'a staunch and vehement Whig<sup>1</sup>.' In August, 1825, his *Essay on Milton* appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, the famous Whig review in which most of his important essays on history or literary criticism were published. 'The effect on the author's reputation was instantaneous. Like Lord Byron, he awoke one morning and found himself famous. The beauties of the work were such as all men could recognise, and its very faults pleased. The redundancy of youthful enthusiasm, which he himself unsparingly condemns in the preface to his collected essays, seemed graceful enough in the eyes of others, if it were only as a relief from the perverted ability of that elaborate libel on our great epic poet which goes by the name of Dr Johnson's *Life of Milton*<sup>2</sup>.' In 1826 he was called to the bar, but his energies were given not to law, but to literature and to politics. In 1830 he was elected Member of Parliament for Calne, and rapidly gained distinction on the Whig side by his eloquent speeches in favour of the Reform Bill. In 1833 he went to Calcutta as a Member of the Supreme Council of India, in which office he did excellent service, especially in drawing up the Indian Penal Code. Before he left India in 1838 he had commenced the *Lays of Ancient Rome*, which were published in 1842. Shortly after his return to England Macaulay had been elected Member of Parliament for Edinburgh, and had joined the Cabinet as Secretary of State for War. In 1841 however the

<sup>1</sup> Sir G. O. Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay*, ch. III.

<sup>2</sup> Trevelyan's *Life*, ch. III.

Whigs were defeated, and although Macaulay remained a Member of the House of Commons until 1858 (with the exception of one interval of five years' duration), the rest of his life was chiefly devoted to literature. He now set to work on his great design of writing a *History of England* 'from the accession of King James the Second down to a time which is within the memory of men still living.' This work however he was only able to carry down to the death of William III. In 1857 he was raised to the peerage, and he died in 1859.

## II. THE ESSAY ON MILTON.

For two generations before 1825 Johnson's *Life* had given to most readers their view of Milton's career and writings. It was quickly superseded for countless thousands throughout the English-speaking world by Macaulay's *Essay*, which has held its position partly on account of the fame of the more mature essays in company with which it usually appears, and partly because it exhibits the same merits in a degree which must be regarded as remarkable, if we consider the youth of the author. The varied learning, the marvellous power of setting forth that learning in an interesting light, the pronounced judgments, the enthusiasm, and the unique style, which are familiar to every reader of Macaulay, are all to be found in this essay. Macaulay in later years took a modest view of his essays, and was reluctant to collect and republish them, and he felt diffidence especially with regard to their literary criticisms; in replying to a proposal that he should contribute an article on Scott to the *Edinburgh Review*, he wrote: 'I am not successful in analysing the works of genius. I have written several things on historical, political, and moral questions, of which, on the fullest reconsideration, I am not ashamed, and by which I am willing to be

estimated : but I never have written a page of criticism on poetry or the fine arts which I would not burn if I had the power.'

The *Essay on Milton* consists of a short account of the discovery and contents of the *Christian Doctrine* (pp. 1—3), a criticism of Milton's poems (pp. 4—30), and a defence of Milton's public conduct (pp. 30—60). In the course of the essay many of those literary and political problems are discussed which do not admit of a final solution, and to which each generation finds a somewhat different answer. Herein lies one of the chief educational merits of the essay ; the student must be prepared throughout to think for himself and form his own conclusions, and it is scarcely necessary to add that, in order to do so, he should study for himself at any rate those portions of Milton's poems which are immediately under consideration. An endeavour is made in the notes to lighten this work by means of references and quotations, but nothing can take the place of independent reading on the part of the student.

A thorough examination of the historical works and documents relating to the period of Milton's life would be far too great a task for anyone to undertake in the course of studying this essay, but here we may avail ourselves of the labours of Dr S. R. Gardiner, who has made the period the study of his life, and whose works, now approaching completion, are generally recognised as authoritative on account of their accuracy, insight, and impartiality. In the notes to the later pages of the essay Macaulay's statements and arguments, where they appear in the light of recent investigation to require modification, are corrected by quotations from Dr Gardiner's works<sup>1</sup>. As these quotations naturally present the points in which

<sup>1</sup> *The History of England from 1603—42, The History of the Great Civil War, The Student's History of England, The Puritan Revolution.*

Macaulay and Gardiner are not in agreement, the student may be recommended to gain a connected view of Gardiner's position by reading Part VI. of his *Student's History*.

### III. DEFINITIONS OF POETRY.

In pp. 7—9 Macaulay discusses the nature of poetry, and gives a definition (p. 7 lines 15—18) to which he recurs more than once in the following pages. There is something characteristic in this definition<sup>1</sup>; yet in later years he would probably have been the first to admit its inadequacy, which the student will most readily perceive by comparing it with other definitions. The passage of Aristotle quoted in the note on p. 5 line 19 is more obviously applicable to epics and the drama than to other kinds of poetry. Bacon's definitions<sup>2</sup> appear like Macaulay's to suggest that there is something unreal in poetry: 'the power which gives some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it'; 'the power which has some participation of divineness because it doth raise and erect the mind by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind, whereas reason doth bow the mind to the nature of things.' Sir James Stephen defined poetry as 'the meet utterance of the deepest thoughts and purest feelings of our nature,' and this definition is more in accordance with those given by several poets: 'the utterance of emotion remembered in tranquillity' (Wordsworth); 'the record of the best and happiest moments of the best and happiest minds' (Shelley); poetry must be 'simple, sensuous<sup>3</sup>, and passionate' (Milton). All these definitions endeavour to seize the essence of

<sup>1</sup> See note on p. 7 line 15.

<sup>2</sup> *On the Advancement of Learning*, II.

<sup>3</sup> *I.e.* not abstract.

poetry as distinguished from its metrical form; on the other hand we have definitions dealing simply with the form of poetry, such as that it is 'metrical composition' (Johnson), or 'elegant and decorated language in metre' (Whately).

#### IV. JOHNSON'S *LIFE OF MILTON*.

When Macaulay speaks of Milton's detractors (p. 4 line 11), there can be little doubt that he is thinking chiefly of Johnson. It is true that from the Restoration to the Revolution the reigning authorities in literature, with the exception of Dryden<sup>1</sup>, were incapable either of admiring Milton's poetry or forgiving his fierceness in controversy; and after the Revolution Addison's favourable criticisms in the *Spectator* (1712), although they produced a considerable impression, did not suffice to dissipate the prejudice. But Johnson's *Life*<sup>2</sup>, published in 1779, still held the field in 1825 as the authoritative criticism of Milton's poems and character. We have already quoted a severe judgment on the work by Sir George Trevelyan<sup>3</sup>, and Mark Pattison<sup>4</sup> says Johnson 'employed all his vigorous and consummate skill to write down Milton.... He did for Milton what Aristophanes did for Socrates, effaced the real man and replaced him by a distorted and degrading caricature.' Johnson's conduct with regard to Milton was open to suspicion on account of his connexion with William Lauder, who had

<sup>1</sup> See note on p. 12 line 22. It is reported that Dryden said of Milton 'This man cuts us all out, and the ancients too.'

<sup>2</sup> It appeared as one of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, which were originally written to accompany a collection of the works of English poets since the Commonwealth, published in 1779—81.

<sup>3</sup> See p. viii.

<sup>4</sup> *Milton* in the *English Men of Letters* Series pp. 218—19.



endeavoured to prove that Milton was a wholesale plagiarist. 'One of the beauties of *Paradise Lost* is the scholar's flavour of literary reminiscence which hangs about its words and images. This Virgilian art, in which Milton has surpassed his master, was represented by this pair of literary bandits as theft, and held to prove at once moral obliquity and intellectual feebleness<sup>1</sup>.' Lauder went further, and actually forged verses, resembling lines in *Paradise Lost*, and ascribed them to older poets; he also took passages from William Hogg's Latin version of *Paradise Lost*<sup>2</sup> and attributed them to writers of Latin poetry somewhat older than Milton. He thus made it appear that the finest passages in *Paradise Lost* were mere thefts. Lauder's frauds were at length detected. 'Johnson, who was not concerned in the cheat, and was only guilty of indolence and party spirit, saved himself by sacrificing his comrade. He afterwards took ample revenge for the mortification of this exposure, in his *Lives of the Poets*<sup>3</sup>.' It must, however, be remembered that Johnson honestly thought Milton's views concerning regicide and divorce deserving of the severest reprobation, and it does not seem necessary to assume that he was influenced by a personal spite when he endeavoured to make Milton's conduct appear ridiculous; on the other hand it is clear that he did not write with the fairness and sympathy without which one man cannot form a just judgment on the career of another. Several of his charges, it is true, are quite indefensible; especially his insinuation that Milton inserted in the *Icon Basiliké* the prayer taken from Sidney's *Arcadia*, for using which Milton thought fit to reproach the king in the *Iconoclast*<sup>4</sup>. But whatever may be Johnson's severity in attacking Milton the controversialist, his treatment of Milton the poet shews much warm and sincere admiration. He set too high a value

<sup>1</sup> Pattison, pp. 217—18.

<sup>2</sup> *Paradisus Amissus*, 1690.

<sup>3</sup> Pattison, p. 218.

<sup>4</sup> See note on p. 59 line 26.

on classical scholarship to give lightly the praise which he bestows on Milton's Latin poems for 'the exquisite imitation of the ancient writers, the purity of the diction, and the harmony of the numbers.' While he finds *Comus* deficient as a drama, he praises it in other respects: 'a work more truly poetical is rarely found'; and yet he regards it as only 'the dawn or twilight of *Paradise Lost*.' He commences his criticism of *Paradise Lost* by observing that 'considered with respect to design, it may claim the first place, and with respect to performance, the second, among the productions of the human mind'; his lengthy analysis of the poem according to Aristotelian methods of criticism abounds with unaffected praise; he concludes his consideration of its defects by saying 'Such are the faults of that wonderful performance *Paradise Lost*; which he who can put in balance with its beauties must be considered not as nice but as dull, as less to be censured for want of candour than pitied for want of sensibility.' He praises *Paradise Regained*, but he condemns *Samson Agonistes* as a tragedy, although he admits that it has many beauties; he is insensible to the charms of *Lycidas* and the *Sonnets*—in both cases perhaps his judgment was blinded by Puritan sentiment in the poems. Now we may dissent from some of these judgments, and it is natural that we should dissent from them, for Johnson's canons of poetical criticism are not those of our generation; but a review which praises Milton's poems so highly, and praises most highly that poem on which Milton's fame chiefly rests, cannot fairly be regarded as an attack on Milton's poetical fame.

## V. ENGLISH POLITICS IN 1825.

Macaulay's defence of Milton's public conduct may be regarded in one aspect as a vindication of his own political principles against the principles of the contemporary Tory party, to which he repeatedly refers (*e.g.* p. 31 line 2, pp. 32—4). We shall be better able to understand his line of argument if we consider the condition of English politics in 1825.

During the long premiership of Lord Liverpool (1812—27) the Whigs appeared to be permanently excluded from office. The success which had crowned the Tory ministry in their dogged resistance to Napoleon seemed to have placed them in an impregnable position in Parliament; but recurring periods of commercial and agricultural distress and many political and social anomalies had caused the rapid spread among the people of what now came to be known as Radical views. In 1816 the discontent led to riots in many places and to the breaking of machinery, to which the rioters attributed their misery. The Government in alarm carried through Parliament a Bill suspending the Habeas Corpus Act (1817), and on a renewal of the distress and disaffection in 1819 the Six Acts were passed, the most important of which limited the freedom of the press and the right of public meeting. Lord Liverpool did not exact from the members of his Administration the unanimity with regard to their views and their measures which is usual in Cabinets at the present time: Peel as Home Secretary commenced the reform of the severe Criminal Laws (1823); the laws against trades-unions were modified (1824—5); Castlereagh as Foreign Secretary protested against the action of the Holy Alliance (1820), and his successor, Canning, recognised the independence of the

Spanish Colonies in South America<sup>1</sup>. The more extreme Tories, however, against whom Macaulay's argument is directed, were prepared to agree with the Holy Alliance in maintaining the principle of Legitimacy, and in suppressing all revolutionary outbreaks, and they did not admit the need for reforms. Towards the close of the Liverpool administration two reforms, which had repeatedly been brought before Parliament, came into prominence, and were strongly urged by the Whigs: Catholic Emancipation (*i.e.* the admission of Roman Catholics to seats in Parliament and to almost all civil and political offices), and the reform of the system by which members of the House of Commons were elected. Catholic Emancipation was granted in 1829 during the Duke of Wellington's administration, in order that the danger of civil war might be averted in Ireland, the country chiefly affected by the measure; the struggle against Parliamentary reform was maintained by the House of Lords until 1832, a Whig ministry under Earl Grey having entered upon office in 1830.

Macaulay therefore frames his argument against a party committed to the principle of Legitimacy or Divine Right, and also to the principle of the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. The latter principle led them to defend the Revolution of 1688, the former to maintain the justice of the cause of Charles I. Macaulay argues that the cause of James II. is more defensible than the cause of Charles I.

The great political strife in which Macaulay and his friends triumphed is past, and we can now look more calmly on the struggles of the XVIIth century, and recognise that 'not on one side alone of the great civil strife of the seventeenth century are our moral and intellectual ancestors. The high energy of a statesmanship founded upon a national resolve may brace itself to noble

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 33—4 and notes.

deeds by the example of Eliot, whilst Strafford's warnings may serve to remind us of the necessity of giving due weight to intelligence in the conduct of the State. He who thinks of moderation, of wise dislike of the application of force to solve religious and political difficulties may think of Falkland, whilst the high ideal of life, without which all work degenerates into self-seeking, is inseparably connected with the name of Milton. The thoughts which these men and others like them made their own did not perish with their failure to achieve political success. The religion of Herbert and of Laud reappeared, modified but not suppressed, after the Long Parliament and Cromwell had done their uttermost. The religion of Sibbes and Milton reappeared after the Restoration in the *Paradise Lost* and in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. The serious intelligence of the Puritan, the breadth of view and the artistic perception of the Churchman, became elements of the national life all the more fruitful of good when they ceased to come into violent collision with one another<sup>1</sup>.

## VI. MACAULAY'S STYLE.

We are told that of the many compliments showered on Macaulay after the appearance of the *Essay on Milton* that which 'came most nearly home—the only commendation of his literary talent which even in the innermost domestic circle he was ever known to repeat,—was the sentence with which Jeffrey<sup>2</sup> acknowledged the receipt of his manuscript: "The more I think, the less I can conceive where you picked up that style"<sup>3</sup>. Macaulay

<sup>1</sup> Gardiner's *Puritan Revolution*, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> Editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, and the most famous critic of the day.

<sup>3</sup> Trevelyan's *Life*, ch. III.

afterwards wrote with somewhat greater flexibility and variety, yet his style in the *Essay* differs but little from his maturer style, although he has no opportunity of displaying his peculiar power of narrative, to which the *History* and some of the *Essays* owe their greatest charm,—the power of combining a multitude of details, often gathered from many different sources, into a bright and harmonious picture.

The student should first examine the structure of the *Essay*, and the arrangement of the matter. He will find that it consists of a plain and simple account of the *Christian Doctrine* (pp. 1—3), a review of Milton's poems (pp. 3—30), and a review of his public conduct (pp. 30—61), both more elevated in tone and ornate in language than the opening statement. He should next examine the *Essay* more in detail; he will find that each paragraph has a definite and simple subject, falling into its proper place in the argument.

He should next analyse several paragraphs, sentence by sentence, and he will discover that the sentences bear to each other as definite a relation as the paragraphs. As Mr Leslie Stephen says, 'his writing bears the same relation to a style of graceful modulation that a bit of mosaic work bears to a picture. Each phrase has a distinct hue instead of melting into its neighbours.' This distinctness he often heightens by the simple device of putting a full stop where another writer would put a comma or a semicolon. Instances may be found on almost every page. Let us take the paragraph on the picturesqueness of Dante (pp. 24—25). Probably most writers would substitute shorter pauses for the full stops in lines 24, 26, 30, 35 of p. 24 and lines 2, 5, 8 of p. 25; and in many passages (*e.g.* p. 24 lines 7—16) they would fuse a series of independent sentences into a period by the use of conjunctions. Macaulay gives us simply a succession of distinct sentences, each expressing a single step in his argument; yet we never feel the slightest

doubt as to the relation which the sentences bear to each other, and—what is still more surprising—each paragraph impresses us as a vivid and picturesque whole.

Macaulay's positive tone of mind made him averse to qualifications and parentheses, and inclined him to press his views home by a succession of brief arguments, or still more frequently, by a series of appropriate instances,—for he preferred a concrete instance to a general or abstract statement (see p. 37 line 33—p. 38 line 3 ; p. 43 lines 4—10 ; p. 48 lines 29—35). From a desire to be clear and forcible, he often repeats words in successive sentences, or frames a sequence of sentences in the same mould (see p. 15 lines 28—30, p. 20 lines 17—20 ; p. 25 lines 16—18). This peculiarity is often impressive, but in the form which it assumed in his later writings, it is apt to pall on the reader.

The structure of the sentences is simple ; the diction is always dignified, but varies in its degree of elevation with the tone of each passage. In many cases a paragraph commences with a statement of arguments or facts, and grows more rhetorical as the author reaches his object ; and at this point he often employs an elaborate metaphor or simile (see p. 16 lines 20—25, p. 29 lines 15—19, p. 56, lines 31—4, p. 59 lines 4—8, p. 61 lines 6—12). And it is also at the climax of a paragraph, when the argument is nearing its conclusion, and only needs a strong and sweeping statement for its completion, that instances of exaggeration are most frequently found (see p. 25 lines 11—13, p. 27 lines 24—7, p. 29 lines 11—14). There is however no merely ornamental 'fine writing' ; words are not used because they are beautiful or high-sounding, but because they express the picture before Macaulay's mind as he writes ; at the moment he really thinks that the gloom of Dante's character 'tinges with its own livid hue the flowers of Paradise.'

It need scarcely be said that a mere analysis of Macaulay's style does not suffice to reveal the secret of

his fame and popularity, to which many qualities contribute : his high purpose, his enthusiasm, his unfailing spirit and vivacity, his stores of learning, and the strength of his imagination, which, to adapt his words with regard to Milton, penetrates the whole mass of his learning with its own heat and radiance.



## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

*Milton's Life*

- 1608 Birth of Milton in London
- 1620 Goes to St Paul's School
- 1625 Goes to Christ's College,  
Cambridge
- 1629 *Ode on the Nativity*
- 1632 Retires to Horton till 1638
- 1633 Probable date of *Arcades*,  
*L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*
- 1634 *Comus* performed
- 1637 *Lycidas*
- 1638-9 Travels on the Continent
- 1641-2 *Tracts against Episcopacy*

*Contemporary Events*

- 1610 Probable date of Shakespeare's *Tempest*; Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*
- 1615 William Harvey announces his discovery of the circulation of the blood
- 1616 Death of Shakespeare
- 1618 Execution of Sir Walter Raleigh
- 1620 Bacon's *Novum Organon*
- 1622 Massenger's *Virgin Martyr*
- 1625 *Charles I.*
- 1628 Charles' Third Parliament; Petition of Right
- 1629 Parliament dissolved; King governs without Parliament till 1640
- 1631 George Herbert's *Temple*
- 1640 Charles' Fourth Parliament summoned and dissolved; the Scots invade England; Fifth (or Long) Parliament meets and impeaches Strafford and Laud
- 1641 Strafford attainted and executed; the Grand Remonstrance

*Milton's Life*

- 1643 Marries Mary Powell
- 1644 *Tract on Education; Tracts on Divorce; Areopagitica*
- 1645 *Tracts on Divorce*
- 1646 *Poems* published; poem *On the New Forcers of Conscience* (ceases to be Presbyterian)
- 1649 *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*; becomes Latin Secretary to Council of State; *Iconoclastes*
- 1651 *Defensio pro populo Anglicano*
- 1652 Becomes quite blind, cp. *Sonnet* xix; *Sonnet* xvi against the Presbyterians
- 1653 Death of first wife
- 1654 *Defensio Secunda*
- 1655 *Pro se Defensio*
- 1656 Marries Catherine Woodcock

*Contemporary Events*

- 1642 Civil war begins; battle of Edgehill; Charles threatens London (*Sonnet* viii)
- 1643 Parliament makes an agreement with the Scots; Solemn League and Covenant
- 1644 Battle of Marston Moor
- 1645 Laud beheaded; Cromwell gains victory of Naseby
- 1646 Charles gives himself up to the Scottish army
- 1647 The Scottish army gives up Charles to the Parliament; Charles seized by the army; escapes to the Isle of Wight; Jeremy Taylor's *Liberty of Prophesying*
- 1648 Herrick's *Noble Numbers* and *Hesperides*; siege of Colchester (*Sonnet* xv); Cromwell defeats the Scottish army; Pride's Purge
- 1649 Charles I. beheaded; Cromwell's Irish campaign
- 1650 Cromwell defeats Scotch at Dunbar; Baxter's *Saints' Rest*
- 1651 Cromwell defeats Charles II. and the Scotch at Worcester; Hobbes' *Leviathan*
- 1653 Cromwell expels the Rump; 'Barebone's Parliament'; the Instrument of Government appoints Cromwell Lord Protector; Walton's *Compleat Angler*
- 1654 First Protectorate Parliament
- 1655 Parliament dissolved; the Major-Generals
- 1656 Second Protectorate Parliament; Cromwell interferes on behalf of the Vaudois (*Sonnet* xviii)

*Milton's Life**Contemporary Events*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>1658 Death of second wife, <i>Sonnet</i> xxiii; <i>Paradise Lost</i> commenced about this time</p> <p>1659 <i>Declaration of Free Commonwealth</i> and other tracts</p> <p>1660 <i>Ready and easy way to establish a Free Commonwealth</i>; is in concealment and afterwards in custody; <i>Defensio populi</i> and <i>Iconoclastes</i> burnt by hangman</p> <p>1664 Marries Elizabeth Minshull</p> <p>1667 <i>Paradise Lost</i> published</p> <p>1669 <i>History of England</i></p> <p>1671 <i>Paradise Regained</i>; <i>Samson Agonistes</i></p> <p>1673 <i>Of True Religion, Heresy and Schism</i>; second edition of early poems</p> <p>1674 Second edition of <i>Paradise Lost</i>; dies, 8 November</p> | <p>1657 The Humble Petition and Advice</p> <p>1658 Third Protectorate Parliament called and dissolved; death of Cromwell; Richard Cromwell declared Protector by the Council of State</p> <p>1659 Richard Cromwell dissolves Parliament; the Rump restored, expelled, and again restored</p> <p>1660 Monk declares for a free Parliament; the Rump provides for the meeting of the Convention Parliament, and dissolves; the Restoration</p> <p>1662 The Act of Uniformity; Royal Society incorporated (begun about 1645)</p> <p>1663 Butler's <i>Hudibras</i>, Part I; A. Sidney's <i>Discourses on Government</i> written</p> <p>1664 The Conventicle Act</p> <p>1665 Bunyan's <i>Holy City</i></p> <p>1667 Clarendon impeached and banished; the Cabal; Dryden's <i>Annus Mirabilis</i>; Cowley's <i>Essays</i></p> <p>1668 The Triple Alliance against France</p> <p>1669 Isaac Newton professor of Mathematics at Cambridge</p> <p>1670 The secret Treaty of Dover; Walton's <i>Lives</i></p> <p>1672 Declaration of Indulgence</p> <p>1673 The Test Act; end of the Cabal</p> <p>1674 Dryden's <i>Man in Innocence</i></p> |
|--|--|



## MILTON.

TOWARDS the close of the year 1823, Mr Lemon, deputy-keeper of the state papers, in the course of his researches among the presses of his office, met with a large Latin manuscript. With it were found corrected copies of the foreign despatches written by Milton, while he filled the 5 office of Secretary, and several papers relating to the Popish trials and the Rye-house Plot. The whole was wrapped up in an envelope, superscribed *To Mr Skinner, Merchant*. On examination, the large manuscript proved to be the long lost Essay on the Doctrines of Christianity, 10 which, according to Wood and Toland, Milton finished after the Restoration, and deposited with Cyriac Skinner. Skinner, it is well known, held the same political opinions with his illustrious friend. It is therefore probable, as Mr Lemon conjectures, that he may have fallen under 15 the suspicions of the government during that persecution of the Whigs which followed the dissolution of the Oxford parliament, and that, in consequence of a general seizure of his papers, this work may have been brought to the office in which it has been found. But whatever the 20 adventures of the manuscript may have been, no doubt can exist that it is a genuine relic of the great poet.

Mr Sumner, who was commanded by his Majesty to edit and translate the treatise, has acquitted himself of his task in a manner honourable to his talents and to 25

his character. His version is not indeed very easy or elegant ; but it is entitled to the praise of clearness and fidelity. His notes abound with interesting quotations, and have the rare merit of really elucidating the text.  
5 The preface is evidently the work of a sensible and candid man, firm in his own religious opinions, and tolerant towards those of others.

The book itself will not add much to the fame of Milton. It is, like all his Latin works, well written,  
10 though not exactly in the style of the prize essays of Oxford and Cambridge. There is no elaborate imitation of classical antiquity, no scrupulous purity, none of the ceremonial cleanness which characterizes the diction of our academical Pharisees. The author does not attempt  
15 to polish and brighten his composition into the Ciceronian gloss and brilliancy. He does not, in short, sacrifice sense and spirit to pedantic refinements. The nature of his subject compelled him to use many words

“That would have made Quintilian stare and gasp.”

20 But he writes with as much ease and freedom as if Latin were his mother tongue ; and, where he is least happy, his failure seems to arise from the carelessness of a native, not from the ignorance of a foreigner. We may apply to him what Denham with great felicity says of  
25 Cowley. He wears the garb, but not the clothes of the ancients.

Throughout the volume are discernible the traces of a powerful and independent mind, emancipated from the influence of authority, and devoted to the search of truth.  
30 Milton professes to form his system from the Bible alone ; and his digest of scriptural texts is certainly among the best that have appeared. But he is not always so happy in his inferences as in his citations.

Some of the heterodox doctrines which he avows

seemed to have excited considerable amazement, particularly his Arianism, and his theory on the subject of polygamy. Yet we can scarcely conceive that any person could have read the *Paradise Lost* without suspecting him of the former ; nor do we think that any reader, 5 acquainted with the history of his life, ought to be much startled at the latter. The opinions which he has expressed respecting the nature of the Deity, the eternity of matter, and the observation of the Sabbath, might, we think, have caused more just surprise. 10

But we will not go into the discussion of these points. The book, were it far more orthodox or far more heretical than it is, would not much edify or corrupt the present generation. The men of our time are not to be converted or perverted by quartos. A few more days, and this 15 essay will follow the *Defensio Populi* to the dust and silence of the upper shelf. The name of its author, and the remarkable circumstances attending its publication, will secure to it a certain degree of attention. For a month or two it will occupy a few minutes of chat in 20 every drawing-room, and a few columns in every magazine ; and it will then, to borrow the elegant language of the play-bills, be withdrawn, to make room for the forthcoming novelties.

We wish, however, to avail ourselves of the interest, 25 transient as it may be, which this work has excited. The dexterous Capuchins never choose to preach on the life and miracles of a saint, until they have awakened the devotional feelings of their auditors by exhibiting some relic of him, a thread of his garment, a lock of his hair, 30 or a drop of his blood. On the same principle, we intend to take advantage of the late interesting discovery, and, while this memorial of a great and good man is still in the hands of all, to say something of his moral and intellectual qualities. Nor, we are convinced, will the 35

severest of our readers blame us if, on an occasion like the present, we turn for a short time from the topics of the day, to commemorate, in all love and reverence, the genius and virtues of John Milton, the poet, the states-  
5 man, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and the martyr of English liberty.

It is by his poetry that Milton is best known ; and it is of his poetry that we wish first to speak. By the general suffrage of the civilised world, his place has been  
10 assigned among the greatest masters of the art. His detractors, however, though outvoted, have not been silenced. There are many critics, and some of great name, who contrive in the same breath to extol the poems and to decry the poet. The works they acknowledge,  
15 considered in themselves, may be classed among the noblest productions of the human mind. But they will not allow the author to rank with those great men who, born in the infancy of civilisation, supplied, by their own powers, the want of instruction, and, though destitute of  
20 models themselves, bequeathed to posterity models which defy imitation. Milton, it is said, inherited what his predecessors created ; he lived in an enlightened age ; he received a finished education ; and we must therefore, if we would form a just estimate of his powers, make  
25 large deductions in consideration of these advantages.

We venture to say, on the contrary, paradoxical as the remark may appear, that no poet has ever had to struggle with more unfavourable circumstances than Milton. He doubted, as he has himself owned, whether  
30 he had not been born "an age too late." For this notion Johnson has thought fit to make him the butt of much clumsy ridicule. The poet, we believe, understood the nature of his art better than the critic. He knew that his poetical genius derived no advantage from the civili-  
35 sation which surrounded him, or from the learning which



he had acquired ; and he looked back with something like regret to the ruder age of simple words and vivid impressions.

We think that, as civilisation advances, poetry almost necessarily declines. Therefore, though we fervently 5 admire those great works of imagination which have appeared in dark ages, we do not admire them the more because they have appeared in dark ages. On the contrary, we hold that the most wonderful and splendid proof of genius is a great poem produced in a civilised 10 age. We cannot understand why those who believe in that most orthodox article of literary faith, that the earliest poets are generally the best, should wonder at the rule as if it were the exception. Surely the uniformity of the phænomenon indicates a corresponding uniformity in the 15 cause.

The fact is, that common observers reason from the progress of the experimental sciences to that of the imitative arts. The improvement of the former is gradual and slow. Ages are spent in collecting materials, ages 20 more in separating and combining them. Even when a system has been formed, there is still something to add, to alter, or to reject. Every generation enjoys the use of a vast hoard bequeathed to it by antiquity, and transmits that hoard, augmented by fresh acquisitions, to future 25 ages. In these pursuits, therefore, the first speculators lie under great disadvantages, and, even when they fail, are entitled to praise. Their pupils, with far inferior intellectual powers, speedily surpass them in actual attainments. Every girl who has read Mrs Marcet's little 30 dialogues on Political Economy could teach Montague or Walpole many lessons in finance. Any intelligent man may now, by resolutely applying himself for a few years, to mathematics, learn more than the great Newton knew after half a century of study and meditation.

But it is not thus with music, with painting, or with sculpture. Still less is it thus with poetry. The progress of refinement rarely supplies these arts with better objects of imitation. It may indeed improve the instruments  
5 which are necessary to the mechanical operations of the musician, the sculptor, and the painter. But language, the machine of the poet, is best fitted for his purpose in its rudest state. Nations, like individuals, first perceive, and then abstract. They advance from particular images  
10 to general terms. Hence the vocabulary of an enlightened society is philosophical, that of a half-civilised people is poetical.

This change in the language of men is partly the cause and partly the effect of a corresponding change in  
15 the nature of their intellectual operations, of a change by which science gains and poetry loses. Generalisation is necessary to the advancement of knowledge ; but particularity is indispensable to the creations of the imagination. In proportion as men know more and think more,  
20 they look less at individuals and more at classes. They therefore make better theories and worse poems. They give us vague phrases instead of images, and personified qualities instead of men. They may be better able to analyse human nature than their predecessors. But  
25 analysis is not the business of the poet. His office is to portray, not to dissect. He may believe in a moral sense, like Shaftesbury ; he may refer all human actions to self-interest, like Helvetius ; or he may never think about the matter at all. His creed on such subjects will no  
30 more influence his poetry, properly so called, than the notions which a painter may have conceived respecting the lacrymal glands, or the circulation of the blood, will affect the tears of his Niobe, or the blushes of his Aurora. If Shakespeare had written a book on the motives of  
35 human actions, it is by no means certain that it would

have been a good one. It is extremely improbable that it would have contained half so much able reasoning on the subject as is to be found in the Fable of the Bees. But could Mandeville have created an Iago? Well as he knew how to resolve characters into their elements, 5 would he have been able to combine those elements in such a manner as to make up a man, a real, living, individual man?

Perhaps no person can be a poet, or can even enjoy poetry, without a certain unsoundness of mind, if any- 10 thing which gives so much pleasure ought to be called unsoundness. By poetry we mean not all writing in verse, nor even all good writing in verse. Our definition excludes many metrical compositions which, on other grounds, deserve the highest praise. By poetry we mean 15 the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination, the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colours. Thus the greatest of poets has described it, in lines universally admired for the vigour and felicity of 20 their diction, and still more valuable on account of the just notion which they convey of the art in which he excelled :

“As imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen 25  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.”

These are the fruits of the “fine frenzy” which he ascribes to the poet—a fine frenzy doubtless, but still a frenzy. Truth, indeed, is essential to poetry ; but it is 30 the truth of madness. The reasonings are just ; but the premises are false. After the first suppositions have been made, every thing ought to be consistent ; but those first suppositions require a degree of credulity which almost amounts to a partial and temporary derangement 35

of the intellect. Hence of all people children are the most imaginative. They abandon themselves without reserve to every illusion. Every image which is strongly presented to their mental eye produces on them the effect  
5 of reality. No man, whatever his sensibility may be, is ever affected by Hamlet or Lear, as a little girl is affected by the story of poor Red Riding-hood. She knows that it is all false, that wolves cannot speak, that there are no wolves in England. Yet in spite of her knowledge she  
10 believes ; she weeps ; she trembles ; she dares not go into a dark room lest she should feel the teeth of the monster at her throat. Such is the despotism of the imagination over uncultivated minds.

In a rude state of society men are children with a  
15 greater variety of ideas. It is therefore in such a state of society that we may expect to find the poetical temperament in its highest perfection. In an enlightened age there will be much intelligence, much science, much philosophy, abundance of just classification and subtle  
20 analysis, abundance of wit and eloquence, abundance of verses, and even of good ones ; but little poetry. Men will judge and compare ; but they will not create. They will talk about the old poets, and comment on them, and to a certain degree enjoy them. But they will scarcely  
25 be able to conceive the effect which poetry produced on their ruder ancestors, the agony, the ecstasy, the plenitude of belief. The Greek Rhapsodist, according to Plato, could scarce recite Homer without falling into convulsions. The Mohawk hardly feels the scalping  
30 knife while he shouts his death-song. The power which the ancient bards of Wales and Germany exercised over their auditors seems to modern readers almost miraculous. Such feelings are very rare in a civilised community, and most rare among those who participate most in its im-  
35 provements. They linger longest among the peasantry.

Poetry produces an illusion on the eye of the mind, as a magic lantern produces an illusion on the eye of the body. And, as the magic lantern acts best in a dark room, poetry effects its purpose most completely in a dark age. As the light of knowledge breaks in upon its 5 exhibitions, as the outlines of certainty become more and more definite, and the shades of probability more and more distinct, the hues and lineaments of the phantoms which the poet calls up grow fainter and fainter. We cannot unite the incompatible advantages of reality and 10 deception, the clear discernment of truth and the exquisite enjoyment of fiction.

He who, in an enlightened and literary society, aspires to be a great poet, must first become a little child. He must take to pieces the whole web of his mind. He must 15 unlearn much of that knowledge which has perhaps constituted hitherto his chief title to superiority. His very talents will be a hindrance to him. His difficulties will be proportioned to his proficiency in the pursuits which are fashionable among his contemporaries; and that 20 proficiency will in general be proportioned to the vigour and activity of his mind. And it is well if, after all his sacrifices and exertions, his works do not resemble a lisping man or a modern ruin. We have seen in our own time great talents, intense labour, and long meditation, 25 employed in this struggle against the spirit of the age, and employed, we will not say absolutely in vain, but with dubious success and feeble applause.

If these reasonings be just, no poet has ever triumphed over greater difficulties than Milton. He received a 30 learned education: he was a profound and elegant classical scholar: he had studied all the mysteries of Rabbinical literature: he was intimately acquainted with every language of modern Europe, from which either pleasure or information was then to be derived. He was 35

perhaps the only great poet of later times who has been distinguished by the excellence of his Latin verse. The genius of Petrarch was scarcely of the first order ; and his poems in the ancient language, though much praised  
5 by those who have never read them, are wretched compositions. Cowley, with all his admirable wit and ingenuity, had little imagination : nor indeed do we think his classical diction comparable to that of Milton. The authority of Johnson is against us on this point. But  
10 Johnson had studied the bad writers of the middle ages till he had become utterly insensible to the Augustan elegance, and was, as ill qualified to judge between two Latin styles as a habitual drunkard to set up for a wine-taster.

15 Versification in a dead language is an exotic, a far-fetched, costly, sickly, imitation of that which elsewhere may be found in healthful and spontaneous perfection. The soils on which this rarity flourishes are in general as ill suited to the production of vigorous native poetry as  
20 the flower-pots of a hot-house to the growth of oaks. That the author of the *Paradise Lost* should have written the *Epistle to Manso* was truly wonderful. Never before were such marked originality and such exquisite mimicry found together. Indeed in all the Latin poems of Milton  
25 the artificial manner indispensable to such works is admirably preserved, while, at the same time, his genius gives to them a peculiar charm, an air of nobleness and freedom, which distinguishes them from all other writings of the same class. They remind us of the amusements  
30 of those angelic warriors who composed the cohort of Gabriel :

“About him exercised heroic games  
The unarmed youth of heaven. But o’er their heads  
Celestial armoury, shield, helm, and spear,  
35 Hung high, with diamond flaming and with gold.”

We cannot look upon the sportive exercises for which the genius of Milton ungirds itself, without catching a glimpse of the gorgeous and terrible panoply which it is accustomed to wear. The strength of his imagination triumphed over every obstacle. So intense and ardent 5 was the fire of his mind, that it not only was not suffocated beneath the weight of fuel, but penetrated the whole superincumbent mass with its own heat and radiance.

It is not our intention to attempt anything like a complete examination of the poetry of Milton. The 10 public has long been agreed as to the merit of the most remarkable passages, the incomparable harmony of the numbers, and the excellence of that style, which no rival has been able to equal, and no parodist to degrade, which displays in their highest perfection the idiomatic 15 powers of the English tongue, and to which every ancient and every modern language has contributed something of grace, of energy, or of music. In the vast field of criticism on which we are entering, innumerable reapers have already put their sickles. Yet the harvest is so 20 abundant that the negligent search of a straggling gleaner may be rewarded with a sheaf.

The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts on the reader. Its effect is 25 produced, not so much by what it expresses, as by what it suggests; not so much by the ideas which it directly conveys, as by other ideas which are connected with them. He electrifies the mind through conductors. The most unimaginative man must understand the Iliad. 30 Homer gives him no choice, and requires from him no exertion, but takes the whole upon himself, and sets the images in so clear a light, that it is impossible to be blind to them. The works of Milton cannot be comprehended or enjoyed, unless the mind of the reader co-operate with 35

that of the writer. He does not paint a finished picture, or play for a mere passive listener. He sketches, and leaves others to fill up the outline. He strikes the keynote, and expects his hearer to make out the melody.

5 We often hear of the magical influence of poetry. The expression in general means nothing : but, applied to the writings of Milton, it is most appropriate. His poetry acts like an incantation. Its merit lies less in its obvious meaning than in its occult power. There would  
10 seem, at first sight, to be no more in his words than in other words. But they are words of enchantment. No sooner are they pronounced, than the past is present and the distant near. New forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the burial-places of the memory give  
15 up their dead. Change the structure of the sentence ; substitute one synonyme for another, and the whole effect is destroyed. The spell loses its power ; and he who should then hope to conjure with it would find himself as much mistaken as Cassim in the Arabian tale, when he  
20 stood crying, "Open Wheat," "Open Barley," to the door which obeyed no sound but "Open Sesame." The miserable failure of Dryden in his attempt to translate into his own diction some parts of the *Paradise Lost*, is a remarkable instance of this.

25 In support of these observations we may remark, that scarcely any passages in the poems of Milton are more generally known or more frequently repeated than those which are little more than muster-rolls of names. They are not always more appropriate or more melodious than  
30 other names. But they are charmed names. Every one of them is the first link in a long chain of associated ideas. Like the dwelling-place of our infancy revisited in manhood, like the song of our country heard in a strange land, they produce upon us an effect wholly  
35 independent of their intrinsic value. One transports us



back to a remote period of history. Another places us among the novel scenes and manners of a distant region. A third evokes all the dear classical recollections of childhood, the school-room, the dog-eared Virgil, the holiday, and the prize. A fourth brings before us the splendid phantoms of chivalrous romance, the trophied lists, the embroidered housings, the quaint devices, the haunted forests, the enchanted gardens, the achievements of enamoured knights, and the smiles of rescued princesses.

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In none of the works of Milton is his peculiar manner more happily displayed than in the *Allegro* and the *Penseroso*. It is impossible to conceive that the mechanism of language can be brought to a more exquisite degree of perfection. These poems differ from others, as attar of roses differs from ordinary rose-water, the close packed essence from the thin diluted mixture. They are indeed not so much poems, as collections of hints, from each of which the reader is to make out a poem for himself. Every epithet is a text for a stanza.

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The *Comus* and the *Samson Agonistes* are works which, though of very different merit, offer some marked points of resemblance. Both are lyric poems in the form of plays. There are perhaps no two kinds of composition so essentially dissimilar as the drama and the ode. The business of the dramatist is to keep himself out of sight, and to let nothing appear but his characters. As soon as he attracts notice to his personal feelings, the illusion is broken. The effect is as unpleasant as that which is produced on the stage by the voice of a prompter or the entrance of a scene-shifter. Hence it was, that the tragedies of Byron were his least successful performances. They resemble those pasteboard pictures invented by the friend of children, Mr Newbery, in which a single moveable head goes round twenty different bodies, so

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that the same face looks out upon us successively, from the uniform of a hussar, the furs of a judge, and the rags of a beggar. In all the characters, patriots and tyrants, haters and lovers, the frown and sneer of Harold were 5 discernible in an instant. But this species of egotism, though fatal to the drama, is the inspiration of the ode. It is the part of the lyric poet to abandon himself, without reserve, to his own emotions.

Between these hostile elements many great men have 10 endeavoured to effect an amalgamation, but never with complete success. The Greek drama, on the model of which the Samson was written, sprang from the Ode. The dialogue was ingrafted on the chorus, and naturally partook of its character. The genius of the greatest of 15 the Athenian dramatists co-operated with the circumstances under which tragedy made its first appearance. Æschylus was, head and heart, a lyric poet. In his time, the Greeks had far more intercourse with the East than in the days of Homer; and they had not yet acquired 20 that immense superiority in war, in science, and in the arts, which, in the following generation, led them to treat the Asiatics with contempt. From the narrative of Herodotus it should seem that they still looked up, with the veneration of disciples, to Egypt and Assyria. At 25 this period, accordingly, it was natural that the literature of Greece should be tinged with the Oriental style. And that style, we think, is discernible in the works of Pindar and Æschylus. The latter often reminds us of the Hebrew writers. The book of Job, indeed, in conduct 30 and diction, bears a considerable resemblance to some of his dramas. Considered as plays, his works are absurd; considered as choruses, they are above all praise. If, for instance, we examine the address of Clytæmnestra to Agamemnon on his return, or the description of the 35 seven Argive chiefs, by the principles of dramatic writing,

we shall instantly condemn them as monstrous. But if we forget the characters, and think only of the poetry, we shall admit that it has never been surpassed in energy and magnificence. Sophocles made the Greek drama as dramatic as was consistent with its original form. His 5 portraits of men have a sort of similarity; but it is the similarity not of a painting, but of a bas-relief. It suggests a resemblance; but it does not produce an illusion. Euripides attempted to carry the reform further. But it was a task far beyond his powers, perhaps beyond 10 any powers. Instead of correcting what was bad, he destroyed what was excellent. He substituted crutches for stilts, bad sermons for good odes.

Milton, it is well known, admired Euripides highly, much more highly than, in our opinion, Euripides de- 15 served. Indeed the caresses which this partiality leads our countryman to bestow on "sad Electra's poet," sometimes remind us of the beautiful Queen of Fairy-land kissing the long ears of Bottom. At all events, there can be no doubt that this veneration for the 20 Athenian, whether just or not, was injurious to the Samson Agonistes. Had Milton taken Æschylus for his model, he would have given himself up to the lyric inspiration, and poured out profusely all the treasures of his mind, without bestowing a thought on those dramatic 25 proprieties which the nature of the work rendered it impossible to preserve. In the attempt to reconcile things in their own nature inconsistent he has failed, as every one else must have failed. We cannot identify ourselves with the characters, as in a good play. We 30 cannot identify ourselves with the poet, as in a good ode. The conflicting ingredients, like an acid and an alkali mixed, neutralise each other. We are by no means insensible to the merits of this celebrated piece, to the severe dignity of the style, the graceful and pathetic 35

solemnity of the opening speech, or the wild and barbaric melody which gives so striking an effect to the choral passages. But we think it, we confess, the least successful effort of the genius of Milton.

5 The *Comus* is framed on the model of the Italian Masque, as the *Samson* is framed on the model of the Greek Tragedy. It is certainly the noblest performance of the kind which exists in any language. It is as far superior to the *Faithful Shepherdess*, as the *Faithful*  
10 *Shepherdess* is to the *Aminta*, or the *Aminta* to the *Pastor Fido*. It was well for Milton that he had here no Euripides to mislead him. He understood and loved the literature of modern Italy. But he did not feel for it the same veneration which he entertained for the remains  
15 of Athenian and Roman poetry, consecrated by so many lofty and endearing recollections. The faults, moreover, of his Italian predecessors were of a kind to which his mind had a deadly antipathy. He could stoop to a plain style, sometimes even to a bald style ; but false brilliancy  
20 was his utter aversion. His Muse had no objection to a russet attire ; but she turned with disgust from the finery of Guarini, as tawdry and as paltry as the rags of a chimney-sweeper on May-day. Whatever ornaments she wears are of massive gold, not only dazzling to the sight,  
25 but capable of standing the severest test of the crucible.

Milton attended in the *Comus* to the distinction which he afterwards neglected in the *Samson*. He made his Masque what it ought to be, essentially lyrical, and dramatic only in semblance. He has not attempted a  
30 fruitless struggle against a defect inherent in the nature of that species of composition ; and he has therefore succeeded, wherever success was not impossible. The speeches must be read as majestic soliloquies ; and he who so reads them will be enraptured with their eloquence,  
35 their sublimity, and their music. The interruptions

of the dialogue, however, impose a constraint upon the writer, and break the illusion of the reader. The finest passages are those which are lyric in form as well as in spirit. "I should much commend," says the excellent Sir Henry Wotton in a letter to Milton, "the 5 tragical part if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Dorique delicacy in your songs and odes, whereunto, I must plainly confess to you, I have seen yet nothing parallel in our language." The criticism was just. It is when Milton escapes from the shackles of the dialogue, 10 when he is discharged from the labour of uniting two incongruous styles, when he is at liberty to indulge his choral raptures without reserve, that he rises even above himself. Then, like his own good Genius bursting from the earthly form and weeds of Thyrsis, he stands forth in 15 celestial freedom and beauty ; he seems to cry exultingly,

"Now my task is smoothly done,  
I can fly, or I can run,"

to skim the earth, to soar above the clouds, to bathe in the Elysian dew of the rainbow, and to inhale the balmy 20 smells of nard and cassia, which the musky wings of the zephyr scatter through the cedared alleys of the Hesperides.

There are several of the minor poems of Milton on which we would willingly make a few remarks. Still 25 more willingly would we enter into a detailed examination of that admirable poem, the *Paradise Regained*, which, strangely enough, is scarcely ever mentioned except as an instance of the blindness of the parental affection which men of letters bear towards the offspring of their 30 intellects. That Milton was mistaken in preferring this work, excellent as it is, to the *Paradise Lost*, we readily admit. But we are sure that the superiority of the *Paradise Lost* to the *Paradise Regained* is not more

decided, than the superiority of the *Paradise Regained* to every poem which has since made its appearance. Our limits, however, prevent us from discussing the point at length. We hasten on to that extraordinary production  
5 which the general suffrage of critics has placed in the highest class of human compositions.

The only poem of modern times which can be compared with the *Paradise Lost* is the *Divine Comedy*. The subject of Milton, in some points, resembled that of  
10 Dante; but he has treated it in a widely different manner. We cannot, we think, better illustrate our opinion respecting our own great poet, than by contrasting him with the father of Tuscan literature.

The poetry of Milton differs from that of Dante, as  
15 the hieroglyphics of Egypt differed from the picture-writing of Mexico. The images which Dante employs speak for themselves; they stand simply for what they are. Those of Milton have a signification which is often discernible only to the initiated. Their value depends  
20 less on what they directly represent than on what they remotely suggest. However strange, however grotesque, may be the appearance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from describing it. He gives us the shape, the colour, the sound, the smell, the taste; he  
25 counts the numbers; he measures the size. His similes are the illustrations of a traveller. Unlike those of other poets, and especially of Milton, they are introduced in a plain, business-like manner; not for the sake of any beauty in the objects from which they are drawn; not  
30 for the sake of any ornament which they may impart to the poem; but simply in order to make the meaning of the writer as clear to the reader as it is to himself. The ruins of the precipice which led from the sixth to the seventh circle of hell were like those of the rock which  
35 fell into the Adige on the south of Trent. The cataract

of Phlegethon was like that of Aqua Cheta at the monastery of St Benedict. The place where the heretics were confined in burning tombs resembled the vast cemetery of Arles.

Now let us compare with the exact details of Dante 5 the dim imitations of Milton. We will cite a few examples. The English poet has never thought of taking the measure of Satan. He gives us merely a vague idea of vast bulk. In one passage the fiend lies stretched out huge in length, floating many a rood, equal in size to the 10 earth-born enemies of Jove, or to the sea-monster which the mariner mistakes for an island. When he addresses himself to battle against the guardian angels, he stands like Teneriffe or Atlas: his stature reaches the sky. Contrast with these descriptions the lines in which Dante 15 has described the gigantic spectre of Nimrod. "His face seemed to me as long and as broad as the ball of St Peter's at Rome; and his other limbs were in proportion; so that the bank, which concealed him from the waist downwards, nevertheless showed so much of him, 20 that three tall Germans would in vain have attempted to reach to his hair." We are sensible that we do no justice to the admirable style of the Florentine poet. But Mr Cary's translation is not at hand; and our version, however rude, is sufficient to illustrate our 25 meaning.

Once more, compare the lazar-house in the eleventh book of the *Paradise Lost* with the last ward of Malebolge in Dante. Milton avoids the loathsome details, and takes refuge in indistinct but solemn and tremendous imagery, 30 Despair hurrying from couch to couch to mock the wretches with his attendance, Death shaking his dart over them, but, in spite of supplications, delaying to strike. What says Dante? "There was such a moan there as there would be if all the sick who, between July 35

and September, are in the hospitals of Valdichiana, and of the Tuscan swamps, and of Sardinia, were in one pit together ; and such a stench was issuing forth as is wont to issue from decayed limbs."

5 We will not take upon ourselves the invidious office of settling precedence between two such writers. Each in his own department is incomparable ; and each, we may remark, has wisely, or fortunately, taken a subject adapted to exhibit his peculiar talent to the greatest  
10 advantage. The Divine Comedy is a personal narrative. Dante is the eye-witness and ear-witness of that which he relates. He is the very man who has heard the tormented spirits crying out for the second death, who has read the dusky characters on the portal within which  
15 there is no hope, who has hidden his face from the terrors of the Gorgon, who has fled from the hooks and the seething pitch of Barbariccia and Draghignazzo. His own hands have grasped the shaggy sides of Lucifer. His own feet have climbed the mountain of expiation.  
20 His own brow has been marked by the purifying angel. The reader would throw aside such a tale in incredulous disgust, unless it were told with the strongest air of veracity, with a sobriety even in its horrors, with the greatest precision and multiplicity in its details. The  
25 narrative of Milton in this respect differs from that of Dante, as the adventures of Amadis differ from those of Gulliver. The author of Amadis would have made his book ridiculous if he had introduced those minute particulars which give such a charm to the work of Swift,  
30 the nautical observations, the affected delicacy about names, the official documents transcribed at full length, and all the unmeaning gossip and scandal of the court, springing out of nothing, and tending to nothing. We are not shocked at being told that a man who lived,  
35 nobody knows when, saw many very strange sights, and



we can easily abandon ourselves to the illusion of the romance. But when Lemuel Gulliver, surgeon, resident at Rotherhithe, tells us of pigmies and giants, flying islands, and philosophising horses, nothing but such circumstantial touches could produce for a single moment 5 a deception on the imagination.

Of all the poets who have introduced into their works the agency of supernatural beings, Milton has succeeded best. Here Dante decidedly yields to him : and as this is a point on which many rash and ill-considered judg- 10 ments have been pronounced, we feel inclined to dwell on it a little longer. The most fatal error which a poet can possibly commit in the management of his machinery, is that of attempting to philosophise too much. Milton has been often censured for ascribing to spirits many 15 functions of which spirits must be incapable. But these objections, though sanctioned by eminent names, originate, we venture to say, in profound ignorance of the art of poetry.

What is spirit? What are our own minds, the 20 portion of spirit with which we are best acquainted? We observe certain phænomena. We cannot explain them into material causes. We therefore infer that there exists something which is not material. But of this something we have no idea. We can define it only 25 by negatives. We can reason about it only by symbols. We use the word ; but we have no image of the thing ; and the business of poetry is with images, and not with words. The poet uses words indeed ; but they are merely the instruments of his art, not its objects. They are the 30 materials which he is to dispose in such a manner as to present a picture to the mental eye. And if they are not so disposed, they are no more entitled to be called poetry than a bale of canvas and a box of colours to be called a painting.

Logicians may reason about abstractions. But the great mass of men must have images. The strong tendency of the multitude in all ages and nations to idolatry can be explained on no other principle. The first inhabitants of Greece, there is reason to believe, worshipped one invisible Deity. But the necessity of having something more definite to adore produced, in a few centuries, the innumerable crowd of Gods and Goddesses. In like manner the ancient Persians thought it impious to exhibit the Creator under a human form. Yet even these transferred to the Sun the worship which, in speculation, they considered due only to the Supreme Mind. The history of the Jews is the record of a continued struggle between pure Theism, supported by the most terrible sanctions, and the strangely fascinating desire of having some visible and tangible object of adoration. Perhaps none of the secondary causes which Gibbon has assigned for the rapidity with which Christianity spread over the world, while Judaism scarcely ever acquired a proselyte, operated more powerfully than this feeling. God, the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception: but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the Synagogue, and the doubts of the Academy, and the pride of the Portico, and the fasces of the Lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust. Soon after Christianity had achieved its triumph, the principle which had assisted it began to corrupt it. It became a new Paganism. Patron saints assumed the offices of household gods. St George took

the place of Mars. St Elmo consoled the mariner for the loss of Castor and Pollux. The Virgin Mother and Cecilia succeeded to Venus and the Muses. The fascination of sex and loveliness was again joined to that of celestial dignity; and the homage of chivalry was blended 5 with that of religion. Reformers have often made a stand against these feelings; but never with more than apparent and partial success. The men who demolished the images in Cathedrals have not always been able to demolish those which were enshrined in their minds. It 10 would not be difficult to show that in politics the same rule holds good. Doctrines, we are afraid, must generally be embodied before they can excite a strong public feeling. The multitude is more easily interested for the most unmeaning badge, or the most insignificant 15 name, than for the most important principle.

From these considerations, we infer that no poet, who should affect that metaphysical accuracy for the want of which Milton has been blamed, would escape a disgraceful failure. Still, however, there was another extreme which, 20 though far less dangerous, was also to be avoided. The imaginations of men are in a great measure under the control of their opinions. The most exquisite art of poetical colouring can produce no illusion, when it is employed to represent that which is at once perceived 25 to be incongruous and absurd. Milton wrote in an age of philosophers and theologians. It was necessary, therefore, for him to abstain from giving such a shock to their understandings as might break the charm which it was his object to throw over their imaginations. This 30 is the real explanation of the indistinctness and inconsistency with which he has often been reproached. Dr Johnson acknowledges that it was absolutely necessary that the spirits should be clothed with material forms. "But," says he, "the poet should have secured 35

the consistency of his system by keeping immateriality out of sight, and seducing the reader to drop it from his thoughts." This is easily said ; but what if Milton could not seduce his readers to drop immateriality from their  
5 thoughts? What if the contrary opinion has taken so full a possession of the minds of men as to leave no room even for the half belief which poetry requires? Such we suspect to have been the case. It was impossible for the poet to adopt altogether the material or the immaterial  
10 system. He therefore took his stand on the debatable ground. He left the whole in ambiguity. He has doubtless, by so doing, laid himself open to the charge of inconsistency. But though philosophically in the wrong, we cannot but believe that he was poetically in  
15 the right. This task, which almost any other writer would have found impracticable, was easy to him. The peculiar art which he possessed of communicating his meaning circuitously through a long succession of associated ideas, and of intimating more than he expressed,  
20 enabled him to disguise those incongruities which he could not avoid.

Poetry which relates to the beings of another world ought to be at once mysterious and picturesque. That of Milton is so. That of Dante is picturesque indeed  
25 beyond any that ever was written. Its effect approaches to that produced by the pencil or the chisel. But it is picturesque to the exclusion of all mystery. This is a fault on the right side, a fault inseparable from the plan of Dante's poem, which, as we have already observed,  
30 rendered the utmost accuracy of description necessary. Still it is a fault. The supernatural agents excite an interest ; but it is not the interest which is proper to supernatural agents. We feel that we could talk to the ghosts and dæmons, without any emotion of unearthly  
35 awe. We could, like Don Juan, ask them to supper, and

eat heartily in their company. Dante's angels are good men with wings. His devils are spiteful ugly executioners. His dead men are merely living men in strange situations. The scene which passes between the poet and Farinata is justly celebrated. Still, Farinata in the burning tomb 5 is exactly what Farinata would have been at an *auto da fé*. Nothing can be more touching than the first interview of Dante and Beatrice. Yet what is it, but a lovely woman chiding, with sweet austere composure, the lover for whose affection she is grateful, but whose vices she 10 reprobates? The feelings which give the passage its charm would suit the streets of Florence as well as the summit of the Mount of Purgatory.

The spirits of Milton are unlike those of almost all other writers. His fiends, in particular, are wonderful 15 creations. They are not metaphysical abstractions. They are not wicked men. They are not ugly beasts. They have no horns, no tails, none of the *fec-faw-fum* of Tasso and Klopstock. They have just enough in common with human nature to be intelligible to human beings. Their 20 characters are, like their forms, marked by a certain dim resemblance to those of men, but exaggerated to gigantic dimensions, and veiled in mysterious gloom.

Perhaps the gods and dæmons of Æschylus may best bear a comparison with the angels and devils of Milton. 25 The style of the Athenian had, as we have remarked, something of the Oriental character; and the same peculiarity may be traced in his mythology. It has nothing of the amenity and elegance which we generally find in the superstitions of Greece. All is rugged, bar- 30 baric, and colossal. The legends of Æschylus seem to harmonise less with the fragrant groves and graceful porticoes in which his countrymen paid their vows to the God of Light and Goddess of Desire, than with those huge and grotesque labyrinths of eternal granite in 35

which Egypt enshrined her mystic Osiris, or in which Hindostan still bows down to her seven-headed idols. His favourite gods are those of the elder generation, the sons of heaven and earth, compared with whom Jupiter himself was a stripling and an upstart, the gigantic Titans, and the inexorable Furies. Foremost among his creations of this class stands Prometheus, half fiend, half redeemer, the friend of man, the sullen and implacable enemy of heaven. Prometheus bears undoubtedly a considerable resemblance to the Satan of Milton. In both we find the same impatience of control, the same ferocity, the same unconquerable pride. In both characters also are mingled, though in very different proportions, some kind and generous feelings. Prometheus, however, is hardly superhuman enough. He talks too much of his chains and his uneasy posture: he is rather too much depressed and agitated. His resolution seems to depend on the knowledge which he possesses that he holds the fate of his torturer in his hands, and that the hour of his release will surely come. But Satan is a creature of another sphere. The might of his intellectual nature is victorious over the extremity of pain. Amidst agonies which cannot be conceived without horror, he deliberates, resolves, and even exults. Against the sword of Michael, against the thunder of Jehovah, against the flaming lake, and the marl burning with solid fire, against the prospect of an eternity of unintermitted misery, his spirit bears up unbroken, resting on its own innate energies, requiring no support from anything external, nor even from hope itself.

To return for a moment to the parallel which we have been attempting to draw between Milton and Dante, we would add that the poetry of these great men has in a considerable degree taken its character from their moral qualities. They are not egotists. They rarely obtrude

their idiosyncrasies on their readers. They have nothing in common with those modern beggars for fame, who extort a pittance from the compassion of the inexperienced by exposing the nakedness and sores of their minds. Yet it would be difficult to name two writers whose 5 works have been more completely, though undesignedly, coloured by their personal feelings.

The character of Milton was peculiarly distinguished by loftiness of spirit ; that of Dante by intensity of feeling. In every line of the Divine Comedy we discern the 10 asperity which is produced by pride struggling with misery. There is perhaps no work in the world so deeply and uniformly sorrowful. The melancholy of Dante was no fantastic caprice. It was not, as far as at this distance of time can be judged, the effect of 15 external circumstances. It was from within. Neither love nor glory, neither the conflicts of earth nor the hope of heaven could dispel it. It turned every consolation and every pleasure into its own nature. It resembled that noxious Sardinian soil of which the intense bitterness 20 is said to have been perceptible even in its honey. His mind was, in the noble language of the Hebrew poet, "a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and where the light was as darkness." The gloom of his character discolours all the passions of men, and all the face of 25 nature, and tinges with its own livid hue the flowers of Paradise and the glories of the eternal throne. All the portraits of him are singularly characteristic. No person can look on the features, noble even to ruggedness, the dark furrows of the cheek, the haggard and woful stare 30 of the eye, the sullen and contemptuous curve of the lip, and doubt that they belong to a man too proud and too sensitive to be happy.

Milton was, like Dante, a statesman and a lover ; and, like Dante, he had been unfortunate in ambition and in 35

love. He had survived his health and his sight, the comforts of his home, and the prosperity of his party. Of the great men by whom he had been distinguished at his entrance into life, some had been taken away from  
5 the evil to come ; some had carried into foreign climates their unconquerable hatred of oppression ; some were pining in dungeons ; and some had poured forth their blood on scaffolds. Venal and licentious scribblers, with just sufficient talent to clothe the thoughts of a pandar in  
10 the style of a bellman, were now the favourite writers of the Sovereign and of the public. It was a loathsome herd, which could be compared to nothing so fitly as to the rabble of Comus, grotesque monsters, half bestial, half human, dropping with wine, bloated with gluttony,  
15 and reeling in obscene dances. Amidst these that fair Muse was placed, like the chaste lady of the Masque, lofty, spotless, and serene, to be chattered at, and pointed at, and grinned at, by the whole rout of Satyrs and Goblins. If ever despondency and asperity could be  
20 excused in any man, they might have been excused in Milton. But the strength of his mind overcame every calamity. Neither blindness, nor gout, nor age, nor penury, nor domestic afflictions, nor political disappointments, nor abuse, nor proscription, nor neglect, had  
25 power to disturb his sedate and majestic patience. His spirits do not seem to have been high, but they were singularly equable. His temper was serious, perhaps stern ; but it was a temper which no sufferings could render sullen or fretful. Such as it was when, on the  
30 eve of great events, he returned from his travels, in the prime of health and manly beauty, loaded with literary distinctions, and glowing with patriotic hopes, such it continued to be when, after having experienced every calamity which is incident to our nature, old, poor,  
35 sightless, and disgraced, he retired to his hovel to die.



Hence it was that, though he wrote the *Paradise Lost* at a time of life when images of beauty and tenderness are in general beginning to fade, even from those minds in which they have not been effaced by anxiety and disappointment, he adorned it with all that is most 5 lovely and delightful in the physical and in the moral world. Neither Theocritus nor Ariosto had a finer or a more healthful sense of the pleasantness of external objects, or loved better to luxuriate amidst sunbeams and flowers, the songs of nightingales, the juice of sum- 10 mer fruits, and the coolness of shady fountains. His conception of love unites all the voluptuousness of the Oriental haram, and all the gallantry of the chivalric tournament, with all the pure and quiet affection of an English fireside. His poetry reminds us of the miracles 15 of Alpine scenery. Nooks and dells, beautiful as fairy land, are embosomed in its most rugged and gigantic elevations. The roses and myrtles bloom unchilled on the verge of the avalanche.

Traces, indeed, of the peculiar character of Milton 20 may be found in all his works ; but it is most strongly displayed in the Sonnets. Those remarkable poems have been undervalued by critics who have not understood their nature. They have no epigrammatic point. There is none of the ingenuity of Filicaja in the thought, none 25 of the hard and brilliant enamel of Petrarch in the style. They are simple but majestic records of the feelings of the poet ; as little tricked out for the public eye as his diary would have been. A victory, an unexpected attack upon the city, a momentary fit of depression or exultation, 30 a jest thrown out against one of his books, a dream which for a short time restored to him that beautiful face over which the grave had closed for ever, led him to musings which, without effort, shaped themselves into verse. The unity of sentiment and severity of style which characterise 35

these little pieces remind us of the Greek Anthology, or perhaps still more of the Collects of the English Liturgy. The noble poem on the Massacres of Piedmont is strictly a collect in verse.

5 The Sonnets are more or less striking, according as the occasions which gave birth to them are more or less interesting. But they are, almost without exception, dignified by a sobriety and greatness of mind to which we know not where to look for a parallel. It would,  
10 indeed, be scarcely safe to draw any decided inferences as to the character of a writer from passages directly egotistical. But the qualities which we have ascribed to Milton, though perhaps most strongly marked in those parts of his works which treat of his personal feelings,  
15 are distinguishable in every page, and impart to all his writings, prose and poetry, English, Latin, and Italian, a strong family likeness.

His public conduct was such as was to be expected from a man of a spirit so high and of an intellect so  
20 powerful. He lived at one of the most memorable eras in the history of mankind, at the very crisis of the great conflict between Oromasdes and Arimanes, liberty and despotism, reason and prejudice. That great battle was fought for no single generation, for no single land. The  
25 destinies of the human race were staked on the same cast with the freedom of the English people. Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles which have since worked their way into the depths of the American forests, which have roused Greece from the slavery and degrada-  
30 tion of two thousand years, and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the knees of the oppressors with an unwonted fear.

Of those principles, then struggling for their infant  
35 existence, Milton was the most devoted and eloquent

literary champion. We need not say how much we admire his public conduct. But we cannot disguise from ourselves that a large portion of his countrymen still think it unjustifiable. The civil war, indeed, has been more discussed, and is less understood, than any event 5 in English history. The friends of liberty laboured under the disadvantage of which the lion in the fable complained so bitterly. Though they were the conquerors, their enemies were the painters. As a body, the Roundheads had done their utmost to decry and ruin literature ; and 10 literature was even with them, as, in the long run, it always is with its enemies. The best book on their side of the question is the charming narrative of Mrs Hutchinson. May's History of the Parliament is good ; but it breaks off at the most interesting crisis of 15 the struggle. The performance of Ludlow is foolish and violent ; and most of the later writers who have espoused the same cause, Oldmixon for instance, and Catherine Macaulay, have, to say the least, been more distinguished by zeal than either by candour or by skill. On the other 20 side are the most authoritative and the most popular historical works in our language, that of Clarendon, and that of Hume. The former is not only ably written and full of valuable information, but has also an air of dignity and sincerity which makes even the prejudices and errors 25 with which it abounds respectable. Hume, from whose fascinating narrative the great mass of the reading public are still contented to take their opinions, hated religion so much that he hated liberty for having been allied with religion, and has pleaded the cause of tyranny with the 30 dexterity of an advocate, while affecting the impartiality of a judge.

The public conduct of Milton must be approved or condemned according as the resistance of the people to Charles the First shall appear to be justifiable or criminal. 35

We shall therefore make no apology for dedicating a few pages to the discussion of that interesting and most important question. We shall not argue it on general grounds. We shall not recur to those primary principles  
5 from which the claim of any government to the obedience of its subjects is to be deduced. We are entitled to that vantage ground ; but we will relinquish it. We are, on this point, so confident of superiority, that we are not unwilling to imitate the ostentatious generosity of those  
10 ancient knights, who vowed to joust without helmet or shield against all enemies, and to give their antagonists the advantage of sun and wind. We will take the naked constitutional question. We confidently affirm, that every reason which can be urged in favour of the Revolution  
15 of 1688 may be urged with at least equal force in favour of what is called the Great Rebellion.

In one respect, only, we think, can the warmest admirers of Charles venture to say that he was a better sovereign than his son. He was not, in name and  
20 profession, a Papist ; we say in name and profession, because both Charles himself and his creature Laud, while they abjured the innocent badges of Popery, retained all its worst vices, a complete subjection of reason to authority, a weak preference of form to substance, a  
25 childish passion for mummeries, an idolatrous veneration for the priestly character, and, above all, a merciless intolerance. This, however, we waive. We will concede that Charles was a good Protestant ; but we say that this Protestantism does not make the slightest distinction  
30 between his case and that of James.

The principles of the Revolution have often been grossly misrepresented, and never more than in the course of the present year. There is a certain class of men, who, while they profess to hold in reverence the  
35 great names and great actions of former times, never

look at them for any other purpose than in order to find in them some excuse for existing abuses. In every venerable precedent they pass by what is essential, and take only what is accidental : they keep out of sight what is beneficial, and hold up to public imitation all that is 5 defective. If, in any part of any great example, there be anything unsound, these flesh-flies detect it with an unerring instinct, and dart upon it with a ravenous delight. If some good end has been attained in spite of them, they feel, with their prototype, that 10

“Their labour must be to pervert that end,  
And out of good still to find means of evil.”

To the blessings which England has derived from the Revolution these people are utterly insensible. The expulsion of a tyrant, the solemn recognition of popular 15 rights, liberty, security, toleration, all go for nothing with them. One sect there was, which, from unfortunate temporary causes, it was thought necessary to keep under close restraint. One part of the empire there was so unhappily circumstanced, that at that time its misery 20 was necessary to our happiness, and its slavery to our freedom. These are the parts of the Revolution which the politicians of whom we speak, love to contemplate, and which seem to them not indeed to vindicate, but in some degree to palliate, the good which it has produced. 25 Talk to them of Naples, of Spain, or of South America. They stand forth zealots for the doctrine of Divine Right which has now come back to us, like a thief from transportation, under the *alias* of Legitimacy. But mention the miseries of Ireland. Then William is a hero. Then 30 Somers and Shrewsbury are great men. Then the Revolution is a glorious era. The very same persons who, in this country, never omit an opportunity of reviving every wretched Jacobite slander respecting the Whigs of

that period, have no sooner crossed St George's Channel, than they begin to fill their bumpers to the glorious and immortal memory. They may truly boast that they look not at men, but at measures. So that evil be done, they  
5 care not who does it ; the arbitrary Charles, or the liberal William, Ferdinand the Catholic, or Frederic the Protestant. On such occasions their deadliest opponents may reckon upon their candid construction. The bold assertions of these people have of late impressed a large portion  
10 of the public with an opinion that James the Second was expelled simply because he was a Catholic, and that the Revolution was essentially a Protestant Revolution.

But this certainly was not the case ; nor can any person who has acquired more knowledge of the history  
15 of those times than is to be found in Goldsmith's Abridgment believe that, if James had held his own religious opinions without wishing to make proselytes, or if, wishing even to make proselytes, he had contented himself with exerting only his constitutional influence for that purpose,  
20 the Prince of Orange would ever have been invited over. Our ancestors, we suppose, knew their own meaning ; and, if we may believe them, their hostility was primarily not to popery, but to tyranny. They did not drive out a tyrant because he was a Catholic ; but they excluded  
25 Catholics from the crown, because they thought them likely to be tyrants. The ground on which they, in their famous resolution, declared the throne vacant, was this, "that James had broken the fundamental laws of the kingdom." Every man, therefore, who approves of the  
30 Revolution of 1688 must hold that the breach of fundamental laws on the part of the sovereign justifies resistance. The question, then, is this ; Had Charles the First broken the fundamental laws of England ?

No person can answer in the negative, unless he  
35 refuses credit, not merely to all the accusations brought

against Charles by his opponents, but to the narratives of the warmest Royalists, and to the confessions of the King himself. If there be any truth in any historian of any party who has related the events of that reign, the conduct of Charles, from his accession to the meeting of 5 the Long Parliament, had been a continued course of oppression and treachery. Let those who applaud the Revolution, and condemn the Rebellion, mention one act of James the Second to which a parallel is not to be found in the history of his father. Let them lay their 10 fingers on a single article in the Declaration of Right, presented by the two Houses to William and Mary, which Charles is not acknowledged to have violated. He had, according to the testimony of his own friends, usurped the functions of the legislature, raised taxes 15 without the consent of parliament, and quartered troops on the people in the most illegal and vexatious manner. Not a single session of parliament had passed without some unconstitutional attack on the freedom of debate ; the right of petition was grossly violated ; arbitrary 20 judgments, exorbitant fines, and unwarranted imprisonments, were grievances of daily occurrence. If these things do not justify resistance, the Revolution was treason ; if they do, the Great Rebellion was laudable.

But, it is said, why not adopt milder measures? Why, 25 after the King had consented to so many reforms, and renounced so many oppressive prerogatives, did the parliament continue to rise in their demands at the risk of provoking a civil war? The ship-money had been given up. The Star Chamber had been abolished. 30 Provision had been made for the frequent convocation and secure deliberation of parliaments. Why not pursue an end confessedly good by peaceable and regular means? We recur again to the analogy of the Revolution. Why was James driven from the throne? Why was he not 35

retained upon conditions? He too had offered to call a free parliament and to submit to its decision all the matters in dispute. Yet we are in the habit of praising our forefathers, who preferred a revolution, a disputed  
5 succession, a dynasty of strangers, twenty years of foreign and intestine war, a standing army, and a national debt, to the rule, however restricted, of a tried and proved tyrant. The Long Parliament acted on the same principle, and is entitled to the same praise. They could  
10 not trust the King. He had no doubt passed salutary laws ; but what assurance was there that he would not break them? He had renounced oppressive prerogatives ; but where was the security that he would not resume them? The nation had to deal with a man whom no tie  
15 could bind, a man who made and broke promises with equal facility, a man whose honour had been a hundred times pawned, and never redeemed.

Here, indeed, the Long Parliament stands on still stronger ground than the Convention of 1688. No action  
20 of James can be compared to the conduct of Charles with respect to the Petition of Right. The Lords and Commons present him with a bill in which the constitutional limits of his power are marked out. He hesitates ; he evades ; at last he bargains to give his  
25 assent for five subsidies. The bill receives his solemn assent ; the subsidies are voted ; but no sooner is the tyrant relieved, than he returns at once to all the arbitrary measures which he had bound himself to abandon, and violates all the clauses of the very Act which he had been  
30 paid to pass.

For more than ten years the people had seen the rights which were theirs by a double claim, by immemorial inheritance and by recent purchase, infringed by the perfidious king who had recognised them. At length  
35 circumstances compelled Charles to summon another



parliament : another chance was given to our fathers. Were they to throw it away as they had thrown away the former? Were they again to be cozened by *le Roi le veut*? Were they again to advance their money on pledges which had been forfeited over and over again? 5 Were they to lay a second Petition of Right at the foot of the throne, to grant another lavish aid in exchange for another unmeaning ceremony, and then to take their departure, till, after ten years more of fraud and oppression, their prince should again require a supply, and 10 again repay it with a perjury? They were compelled to choose whether they would trust a tyrant or conquer him. We think that they chose wisely and nobly.

The advocates of Charles, like the advocates of other malefactors against whom overwhelming evidence is 15 produced, generally decline all controversy about the facts, and content themselves with calling testimony to character. He had so many private virtues! And had James the Second no private virtues? Was Oliver Cromwell, his bitterest enemies themselves being judges, 20 destitute of private virtues? And what, after all, are the virtues ascribed to Charles? A religious zeal, not more sincere than that of his son, and fully as weak and narrow-minded, and a few of the ordinary household decencies which half the tombstones in England claim 25 for those who lie beneath them. A good father! A good husband! Ample apologies indeed for fifteen years of persecution, tyranny, and falsehood!

We charge him with having broken his coronation oath; and we are told that he kept his marriage vow! 30 We accuse him of having given up his people to the merciless inflictions of the most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates; and the defence is, that he took his little son on his knee and kissed him! We censure him for having violated the articles of the Petition of Right, 35

after having, for good and valuable consideration, promised to observe them; and we are informed that he was accustomed to hear prayers at six o'clock in the morning! It is to such considerations as these, together with his  
5 Vandyke dress, his handsome face, and his peaked beard, that he owes, we verily believe, most of his popularity with the present generation.

For ourselves, we own that we do not understand the common phrase, a good man, but a bad king. We can  
10 as easily conceive a good man and an unnatural father, or a good man and a treacherous friend. We cannot, in estimating the character of an individual, leave out of our consideration his conduct in the most important of all human relations; and if in that relation we find him to  
• 15 have been selfish, cruel, and deceitful, we shall take the liberty to call him a bad man, in spite of all his temperance at table, and all his regularity at chapel.

We cannot refrain from adding a few words respecting a topic on which the defenders of Charles are fond of  
20 dwelling. If, they say, he governed his people ill, he at least governed them after the example of his predecessors. If he violated their privileges, it was because those privileges had not been accurately defined. No act of oppression has ever been imputed to him which has not  
25 a parallel in the annals of the Tudors. This point Hume has laboured, with an art which is as discreditable in a historical work as it would be admirable in a forensic address. The answer is short, clear, and decisive. Charles had assented to the Petition of Right. He had renounced  
30 the oppressive powers said to have been exercised by his predecessors, and he had renounced them for money. He was not entitled to set up his antiquated claims against his own recent release.

These arguments are so obvious, that it may seem  
35 superfluous to dwell upon them. But those who have

observed how much the events of that time are misrepresented and misunderstood will not blame us for stating the case simply. It is a case of which the simplest statement is the strongest.

The enemies of the Parliament, indeed, rarely choose 5 to take issue on the great points of the question. They content themselves with exposing some of the crimes and follies to which public commotions necessarily give birth. They bewail the unmerited fate of Strafford. They execrate the lawless violence of the army. They laugh 10 at the Scriptural names of the preachers. Major-generals fleecing their districts ; soldiers revelling on the spoils of a ruined peasantry ; upstarts, enriched by the public plunder, taking possession of the hospitable firesides and hereditary trees of the old gentry ; boys smashing the 15 beautiful windows of cathedrals ; Quakers riding naked through the market-place ; Fifth-monarchy-men shouting for King Jesus ; agitators lecturing from the tops of tubs on the fate of Agag ;—all these, they tell us, were the offspring of the Great Rebellion. 20

Be it so. We are not careful to answer in this matter. These charges, were they infinitely more important, would not alter our opinion of an event which alone has made us to differ from the slaves who crouch beneath despotic 25 sceptres. Many evils, no doubt, were produced by the civil war. They were the price of our liberty. Has the acquisition been worth the sacrifice ? It is the nature of the Devil of tyranny to tear and rend the body which he leaves. Are the miseries of continued possession less horrible than the struggles of the tremendous exorcism ? 30

If it were possible that a people brought up under an intolerant and arbitrary system could subvert that system without acts of cruelty and folly, half the objections to despotic power would be removed. We should, in that case, be compelled to acknowledge that it at least pro- 35

duces no pernicious effects on the intellectual and moral character of a nation. We deplore the outrages which accompany revolutions. But the more violent the outrages, the more assured we feel that a revolution was  
5 necessary. The violence of those outrages will always be proportioned to the ferocity and ignorance of the people ; and the ferocity and ignorance of the people will be proportioned to the oppression and degradation under which they have been accustomed to live. Thus it was  
10 in our civil war. The heads of the church and state reaped only that which they had sown. The government had prohibited free discussion : it had done its best to keep the people unacquainted with their duties and their rights. The retribution was just and natural. If our  
15 rulers suffered from popular ignorance, it was because they had themselves taken away the key of knowledge. If they were assailed with blind fury, it was because they had exacted an equally blind submission.

It is the character of such revolutions that we always  
20 see the worst of them at first. Till men have been some time free, they know not how to use their freedom. The natives of wine countries are generally sober. In climates where wine is a rarity intemperance abounds. A newly-liberated people may be compared to a northern army  
25 encamped on the Rhine or the Xeres. It is said that, when soldiers in such a situation first find themselves able to indulge without restraint in such a rare and expensive luxury, nothing is to be seen but intoxication. Soon, however, plenty teaches discretion ; and, after wine  
30 has been for a few months their daily fare, they become more temperate than they had ever been in their own country. In the same manner, the final and permanent fruits of liberty are wisdom, moderation, and mercy. Its immediate effects are often atrocious crimes, conflicting  
35 errors, scepticism on points the most clear, dogmatism

on points the most mysterious. It is just at this crisis that its enemies love to exhibit it. They pull down the scaffolding from the half-finished edifice : they point to the flying dust, the falling bricks, the comfortless rooms, the frightful irregularity of the whole appearance ; and 5 then ask in scorn where the promised splendour and comfort is to be found. If such miserable sophisms were to prevail, there would never be a good house or a good government in the world.

Ariosto tells a pretty story of a fairy, who, by some 10 mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear at certain seasons in the form of a foul and poisonous snake. Those who injured her during the period of her disguise were for ever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in 15 spite of her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterwards revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her, accompanied their steps, granted all their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love and victorious in 20 war. Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But woe to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her ! And happy are those who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at 25 length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory !

There is only one cure for the evils which newly-acquired freedom produces ; and that cure is freedom. When a prisoner first leaves his cell, he cannot bear the 30 light of day : he is unable to discriminate colours, or recognise faces. But the remedy is, not to remand him into his dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays of the sun. The blaze of truth and liberty may at first dazzle and bewilder nations which have become half-blind in 35

the house of bondage. But let them gaze on, and they will soon be able to bear it. In a few years men learn to reason. The extreme violence of opinions subsides. Hostile theories correct each other. The scattered elements of truth cease to contend, and begin to coalesce. And at length a system of justice and order is educed out of the chaos.

Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition, that no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learnt to swim. If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait for ever.

Therefore it is that we decidedly approve of the conduct of Milton and the other wise and good men who, in spite of much that was ridiculous and hateful in the conduct of their associates, stood firmly by the cause of Public Liberty. We are not aware that the poet has been charged with personal participation in any of the blameable excesses of that time. The favourite topic of his enemies is the line of conduct which he pursued with regard to the execution of the King. Of that celebrated proceeding we by no means approve. Still we must say, in justice to the many eminent persons who concurred in it, and in justice more particularly to the eminent person who defended it, that nothing can be more absurd than the imputations which, for the last hundred and sixty years, it has been the fashion to cast upon the Regicides. We have, throughout, abstained from appealing to first principles. We will not appeal to them now. We recur again to the parallel case of the Revolution. What essential distinction can be drawn between the execution of the father and the deposition

of the son? What constitutional maxim is there which applies to the former and not to the latter? The King can do no wrong. If so, James was as innocent as Charles could have been. The minister only ought to be responsible for the acts of the Sovereign. If so, why not 5 impeach Jefferies and retain James? The person of a King is sacred. Was the person of James considered sacred at the Boyne? To discharge cannon against an army in which a King is known to be posted is to approach pretty near to regicide. Charles, too, it 10 should always be remembered, was put to death by men who had been exasperated by the hostilities of several years, and who had never been bound to him by any other tie than that which was common to them with all their fellow-citizens. Those who drove James from his 15 throne, who seduced his army, who alienated his friends, who first imprisoned him in his palace and then turned him out of it, who broke in upon his very slumbers by imperious messages, who pursued him with fire and sword from one part of the empire to another, who 20 hanged, drew, and quartered his adherents, and attainted his innocent heir, were his nephew and his two daughters. When we reflect on all these things, we are at a loss to conceive how the same persons who, on the fifth of November, thank God for wonderfully conducting his 25 servant William, and for making all opposition fall before him until he became our King and Governor, can, on the thirtieth of January, contrive to be afraid that the blood of the Royal Martyr may be visited on themselves and their children.

30

We disapprove, we repeat, of the execution of Charles ; not because the constitution exempts the King from responsibility, for we know that all such maxims, however excellent, have their exceptions ; nor because we feel any peculiar interest in his character, for we think 35

that his sentence describes him with perfect justice as  
"a tyrant, a traitor, a murderer, and a public enemy";  
but because we are convinced that the measure was most  
injurious to the cause of freedom. He whom it removed  
5 was a captive and a hostage: his heir, to whom the  
allegiance of every Royalist was instantly transferred,  
was at large. The Presbyterians could never have been  
perfectly reconciled to the father: they had no such  
rooted enmity to the son. The great body of the people,  
10 also, contemplated that proceeding with feelings which,  
however unreasonable, no government could safely venture  
to outrage.

But though we think the conduct of the Regicides  
blameable, that of Milton appears to us in a very different  
15 light. The deed was done. It could not be undone.  
The evil was incurred; and the object was to render it as  
small as possible. We censure the chiefs of the army  
for not yielding to the popular opinion; but we cannot  
censure Milton for wishing to change that opinion. The  
20 very feeling which would have restrained us from com-  
mitting the act would have led us, after it had been  
committed, to defend it against the ravings of servility  
and superstition. For the sake of public liberty, we wish  
that the thing had not been done, while the people  
25 disapproved of it. But, for the sake of public liberty,  
we should also have wished the people to approve of it  
when it was done. If anything more were wanting to  
the justification of Milton, the book of Salmasius would  
furnish it. That miserable performance is now with  
30 justice considered only as a beacon to word-catchers,  
who wish to become statesmen. The celebrity of the  
man who refuted it, the "*Æneæ magni dextra*," gives it  
all its fame with the present generation. In that age the  
state of things was different. It was not then fully  
35 understood how vast an interval separates the mere



classical scholar from the political philosopher. Nor can it be doubted that a treatise which, bearing the name of so eminent a critic, attacked the fundamental principles of all free governments, must, if suffered to remain unanswered, have produced a most pernicious effect on the public mind. 5

We wish to add a few words relative to another subject, on which the enemies of Milton delight to dwell, his conduct during the administration of the Protector. That an enthusiastic votary of liberty should accept office 10 under a military usurper seems, no doubt, at first sight, extraordinary. But all the circumstances in which the country was then placed were extraordinary. The ambition of Oliver was of no vulgar kind. He never seems to have coveted despotic power. He at first fought 15 sincerely and manfully for the Parliament, and never deserted it till it had deserted its duty. If he dissolved it by force, it was not till he found that the few members who remained after so many deaths, secessions, and expulsions, were desirous to appropriate to themselves 20 a power which they held only in trust, and to inflict upon England the curse of a Venetian oligarchy. But even when thus placed by violence at the head of affairs, he did not assume unlimited power. He gave the country a constitution far more perfect than any which had at 25 that time been known in the world. He reformed the representative system in a manner which has extorted praise even from Lord Clarendon. For himself he demanded indeed the first place in the commonwealth; but with powers scarcely so great as those of a Dutch 30 stadtholder, or an American president. He gave the Parliament a voice in the appointment of ministers, and left to it the whole legislative authority, not even reserving to himself a veto on its enactments; and he did not require that the chief magistracy should be hereditary in 35

his family. Thus far, we think, if the circumstances of the time and the opportunities which he had of aggrandising himself be fairly considered, he will not lose by comparison with Washington or Bolivar. Had his  
5 moderation been met by corresponding moderation, there is no reason to think that he would have overstepped the line which he had traced for himself. But when he found that his parliaments questioned the authority under which they met, and that he was in danger of being  
10 deprived of the restricted power which was absolutely necessary to his personal safety, then, it must be acknowledged, he adopted a more arbitrary policy.

Yet, though we believe that the intentions of Cromwell were at first honest, though we believe that he was  
15 driven from the noble course which he had marked out for himself by the almost irresistible force of circumstances, though we admire, in common with all men of all parties, the ability and energy of his splendid administration, we are not pleading for arbitrary and lawless power, even in  
20 his hands. We know that a good constitution is infinitely better than the best despot. But we suspect, that at the time of which we speak, the violence of religious and political enmities rendered a stable and happy settlement next to impossible. The choice lay, not between Cromwell  
25 and liberty, but between Cromwell and the Stuarts. That Milton chose well, no man can doubt who fairly compares the events of the protectorate with those of the thirty years which succeeded it, the darkest and most disgraceful in the English annals. Cromwell was evidently laying,  
30 though in an irregular manner, the foundations of an admirable system. Never before had religious liberty and the freedom of discussion been enjoyed in a greater degree. Never had the national honour been better upheld abroad, or the seat of justice better filled at home.  
35 And it was rarely that any opposition which stopped

short of open rebellion provoked the resentment of the liberal and magnanimous usurper. The institutions which he had established, as set down in the Instrument of Government, and the Humble Petition and Advice, were excellent. His practice, it is true, too often departed 5 from the theory of these institutions. But, had he lived a few years longer, it is probable that his institutions would have survived him, and that his arbitrary practice would have died with him. His power had not been consecrated by ancient prejudices. It was upheld only 10 by his great personal qualities. Little, therefore, was to be dreaded from a second protector, unless he were also a second Oliver Cromwell. The events which followed his decease are the most complete vindication of those who exerted themselves to uphold his authority. His 15 death dissolved the whole frame of society. The army rose against the Parliament, the different corps of the army against each other. Sect raved against sect. Party plotted against party. The Presbyterians, in their eagerness to be revenged on the Independents, sacrificed their 20 own liberty, and deserted all their old principles. Without casting one glance on the past, or requiring one stipulation for the future, they threw down their freedom at the feet of the most frivolous and heartless of tyrants.

Then came those days, never to be recalled without a 25 blush, the days of servitude without loyalty and sensuality without love, of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices, the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds, the golden age of the coward, the bigot, and the slave. The King cringed to his rival that he might trample on his people, 30 sank into a viceroy of France, and pocketed, with complacent infamy, her degrading insults, and her more degrading gold. The caresses of harlots, and the jests of buffoons, regulated the policy of the state. The government had just ability enough to deceive, and just 35

religion enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the Anathema Maranatha of every fawning dean. In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James, Belial and 5 Moloch ; and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race, accursed of God and man, was a second time driven forth, to wander on the face of the earth, 10 and to be a by-word and a shaking of the head to the nations.

Most of the remarks which we have hitherto made on the public character of Milton, apply to him only as one of a large body. We shall proceed to notice some of the 15 peculiarities which distinguished him from his contemporaries. And, for that purpose, it is necessary to take a short survey of the parties into which the political world was at that time divided. We must premise, that our observations are intended to apply only to those who 20 adhered, from a sincere preference, to one or to the other side. In days of public commotion, every faction, like an Oriental army, is attended by a crowd of camp-followers, an useless and artless rabble, who prowl round its line of march in the hope of picking up something 25 under its protection, but desert it in the day of battle, and often join to exterminate it after a defeat. England, at the time of which we are treating, abounded with fickle and selfish politicians, who transferred their support to every government as it rose, who kissed the hand of the 30 King in 1640, and spat in his face in 1649, who shouted with equal glee when Cromwell was inaugurated in Westminster Hall, and when he was dug up to be hanged at Tyburn, who dined on calves' heads, or stuck up oak-branches, as circumstances altered, without the slightest 35 shame or repugnance. These we leave out of the account.

We take our estimate of parties from those who really deserve to be called partisans.

We would speak first of the Puritans, the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced. The odious and ridiculous parts of their 5 character lie on the surface. He that runs may read them; nor have there been wanting attentive and malicious observers to point them out. For many years after the Restoration, they were the theme of unmeasured invective and derision. They were exposed to the utmost 10 licentiousness of the press and of the stage, at the time when the press and the stage were most licentious. They were not men of letters; they were, as a body, unpopular; they could not defend themselves; and the public would not take them under its protection. They were therefore 15 abandoned, without reserve, to the tender mercies of the satirists and dramatists. The ostentatious simplicity of their dress, their sour aspect, their nasal twang, their stiff posture, their long graces, their Hebrew names, the Scriptural phrases which they introduced on every oc- 20 casion, their contempt of human learning, their detestation of polite amusements, were indeed fair game for the laughers. But it is not from the laughers alone that the philosophy of history is to be learnt. And he who approaches this subject should carefully guard against the 25 influence of that potent ridicule which has already misled so many excellent writers.

“Ecco il fonte del riso, ed ecco il rio  
 Che mortali perigli in se contiene:  
 Hor qui tener a fren nostro desio,  
 Ed esser cauti molto a noi conviene.”

30

Those who roused the people to resistance, who directed their measures through a long series of eventful years, who formed, out of the most unpromising materials,

the finest army that Europe had ever seen, who trampled down King, Church, and Aristocracy, who, in the short intervals of domestic sedition and rebellion, made the name of England terrible to every nation on the face of the earth, were no vulgar fanatics. Most of their absurdities were mere external badges, like the signs of freemasonry, or the dresses of friars. We regret that these badges were not more attractive. We regret that a body to whose courage and talents mankind has owed inestimable obligations, had not the lofty elegance which distinguished some of the adherents of Charles the First, or the easy good-breeding for which the court of Charles the Second was celebrated. But, if we must make our choice, we shall, like Bassanio in the play, turn from the specious caskets which contain only the Death's head and the Fool's head, and fix on the plain leaden chest which conceals the treasure.

The Puritans were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging, in general terms, an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being, for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know him, to serve him, to enjoy him, was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on his intolerable brightness, and to commune with him face to face. Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. The difference between the greatest and the meanest of mankind seemed to vanish, when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from him on whom their own eyes

were constantly fixed. They recognised no title to superiority but his favour ; and, confident of that favour, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands ; their diadems crowns of glory which should never fade away. On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt : for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language, nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. The very meanest of them was a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged, on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest, who had been destined, before heaven and earth were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events which short-sighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes, had been ordained on his account. For his sake empires had risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty had proclaimed his will by the pen of the Evangelist and the harp of the prophet. He had been wrested by no common deliverer from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had risen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God.

Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men,

the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion ; the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his maker : but he set his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement, 5 he prayed with convulsions, and groans, and tears. He was half-maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels or the tempting whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the Beatific Vision, or woke screaming from dreams of everlasting fire. Like 10 Vane, he thought himself intrusted with the sceptre of the millennial year. Like Fleetwood, he cried in the bitterness of his soul that God had hid his face from him. But when he took his seat in the council, or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul 15 had left no perceptible trace behind them. People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages, and heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of 20 debate or in the field of battle. These fanatics brought to civil and military affairs a coolness of judgment and an immutability of purpose which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious zeal, but which were in fact the necessary effects of it. The intensity of 25 their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other. One overpowering sentiment had subjected to itself pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terrors and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, 30 but not for the things of this world. Enthusiasm had made them Stoics, had cleared their minds from every vulgar passion and prejudice, and raised them above the influence of danger and of corruption. It sometimes might lead them to pursue unwise ends, but never to 35 choose unwise means. They went through the world,



like Sir Artegal's iron man Talus with his flail, crushing and trampling down oppressors, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities, insensible to fatigue, to pleasure, and to pain, not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by 5 any barrier.

Such we believe to have been the character of the Puritans. We perceive the absurdity of their manners. We dislike the sullen gloom of their domestic habits. We acknowledge that the tone of their minds was often 10 injured by straining after things too high for mortal reach: and we know that, in spite of their hatred of Popery, they too often fell into the worst vices of that bad system, intolerance and extravagant austerity; that they had their anchorites and their crusades, their 15 Dunstons and their De Montforts, their Dominics and their Escobars. Yet, when all circumstances are taken into consideration, we do not hesitate to pronounce them a brave, a wise, an honest, and an useful body.

The Puritans espoused the cause of civil liberty mainly 20 because it was the cause of religion. There was another party, by no means numerous, but distinguished by learning and ability, which acted with them on very different principles. We speak of those whom Cromwell was accustomed to call the Heathens, men who were, in 25 the phraseology of that time, doubting Thomases or careless Gallios with regard to religious subjects, but passionate worshippers of freedom. Heated by the study of ancient literature, they set up their country as their idol, and proposed to themselves the heroes of Plutarch 30 as their examples. They seem to have borne some resemblance to the Brissotines of the French Revolution. But it is not very easy to draw the line of distinction between them and their devout associates, whose tone and manner they sometimes found it convenient to 35

affect, and sometimes, it is probable, imperceptibly adopted.

We now come to the Royalists. We shall attempt to speak of them, as we have spoken of their antagonists, 5 with perfect candour. We shall not charge upon a whole party the profligacy and baseness of the horse-boys, gamblers and bravoës, whom the hope of license and plunder attracted from all the dens of Whitefriars to the standard of Charles, and who disgraced their associates 10 by excesses which, under the stricter discipline of the Parliamentary armies, were never tolerated. We will select a more favourable specimen. Thinking as we do that the cause of the King was the cause of bigotry and tyranny, we yet cannot refrain from looking with com- 15 placency on the character of the honest old Cavaliers. We feel a national pride in comparing them with the instruments which the despots of other countries are compelled to employ, with the mutes who throng their antechambers, and the Janissaries who mount guard at 20 their gates. Our royalist countrymen were not heartless, dangling courtiers, bowing at every step and simpering at every word. They were not mere machines for destruction dressed up in uniforms, caned into skill, intoxicated into valour, defending without love, destroying 25 without hatred. There was a freedom in their subserviency, a nobleness in their very degradation. The sentiment of individual independence was strong within them. They were indeed misled, but by no base or selfish motive. Compassion and romantic honour, the 30 prejudices of childhood, and the venerable names of history, threw over them a spell potent as that of Duessa; and, like the Red-Cross Knight, they thought that they were doing battle for an injured beauty, while they defended a false and loathsome sorceress. In truth they 35 scarcely entered at all into the merits of the political

question. It was not for a treacherous king or an intolerant church that they fought, but for the old banner which had waved in so many battles over the heads of their fathers, and for the altars at which they had received the hands of their brides. Though nothing could be 5 more erroneous than their political opinions, they possessed, in a far greater degree than their adversaries, those qualities which are the grace of private life. With many of the vices of the Round Table, they had also many of its virtues—courtesy, generosity, veracity, tender- 10 ness, and respect for women. They had far more both of profound and of polite learning than the Puritans. Their manners were more engaging, their tempers more amiable, their tastes more elegant, and their households more cheerful.

15

Milton did not strictly belong to any of the classes which we have described. He was not a Puritan. He was not a free-thinker. He was not a Royalist. In his character the noblest qualities of every party were combined in harmonious union. From the Parliament 20 and from the Court, from the conventicle and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral circles of the Roundheads, and from the Christmas revel of the hospitable Cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the 25 base and pernicious ingredients by which those finer elements were defiled. Like the Puritans, he lived

“As ever in his great task-master’s eye.”

Like them, he kept his mind continually fixed on an Almighty Judge and an eternal reward. And hence he 30 acquired their contempt of external circumstances, their fortitude, their tranquillity, their inflexible resolution. But not the coolest sceptic or the most profane scoffer was more perfectly free from the contagion of their frantic

delusions, their savage manners, their ludicrous jargon, their scorn of science, and their aversion to pleasure. Hating tyranny with a perfect hatred, he had nevertheless all the estimable and ornamental qualities which were  
5 almost entirely monopolised by the party of the tyrant. There was none who had a stronger sense of the value of literature, a finer relish for every elegant amusement, or a more chivalrous delicacy of honour and love. Though his opinions were democratic, his tastes and his associations  
10 were such as harmonise best with monarchy and aristocracy. He was under the influence of all the feelings by which the gallant Cavaliers were misled. But of those feelings he was the master and not the slave. Like the hero of Homer, he enjoyed all the pleasures of fascination ;  
15 but he was not fascinated. He listened to the song of the Syrens ; yet he glided by without being seduced to their fatal shore. He tasted the cup of Circe ; but he bore about him a sure antidote against the effects of its bewitching sweetness. The illusions which captivated  
20 his imagination never impaired his reasoning powers. The statesman was proof against the splendour, the solemnity, and the romance which enchanted the poet. Any person who will contrast the sentiments expressed in his treatises on Prelacy with the exquisite lines on  
25 ecclesiastical architecture and music in the *Penseroso*, which was published about the same time, will understand our meaning. This is an inconsistency which, more than anything else, raises his character in our estimation, because it shows how many private tastes and feelings he  
30 sacrificed, in order to do what he considered his duty to mankind. It is the very struggle of the noble Othello. His heart relents ; but his hand is firm. He does nought in hate, but all in honour. He kisses the beautiful deceiver before he destroys her.

35 That from which the public character of Milton

derives its great and peculiar splendour still remains to be mentioned. If he exerted himself to overthrow a forsworn king and a persecuting hierarchy, he exerted himself in conjunction with others. But the glory of the battle which he fought for, the species of freedom which 5 is the most valuable, and which was then the least understood, the freedom of the human mind, is all his own. Thousands and tens of thousands among his contemporaries raised their voices against Ship-money and the Star Chamber. But there were few indeed who 10 discerned the more fearful evils of moral and intellectual slavery, and the benefits which would result from the liberty of the press and the unfettered exercise of private judgment. These were the objects which Milton justly conceived to be the most important. He was desirous 15 that the people should think for themselves as well as tax themselves, and should be emancipated from the dominion of prejudice as well as from that of Charles. He knew that those who, with the best intentions, overlooked these schemes of reform, and contented themselves with pulling 20 down the King and imprisoning the malignants, acted like the heedless brothers in his own poem, who, in their eagerness to disperse the train of the sorcerer, neglected the means of liberating the captive. They thought only of conquering when they should have thought of disen- 25 chanting.

“Oh, ye mistook! Ye should have snatched his wand  
And bound him fast. Without the rod reversed,  
And backward mutters of dissevering power,  
We cannot free the lady that sits here  
Bound in strong fetters fixed and motionless.”

30

To reverse the rod, to spell the charm backward, to break the ties which bound a stupefied people to the seat of enchantment, was the noble aim of Milton. To this

all his public conduct was directed. For this he joined the Presbyterians ; for this he forsook them. He fought their perilous battle ; but he turned away with disdain from their insolent triumph. He saw that they, like those  
5 whom they had vanquished, were hostile to the liberty of thought. He therefore joined the Independents, and called upon Cromwell to break the secular chain, and to save free conscience from the paw of the Presbyterian wolf. With a view to the same great object, he attacked  
10 the licensing system, in that sublime treatise which every statesman should wear as a sign upon his hand and as frontlets between his eyes. His attacks were, in general, directed less against particular abuses than against those deeply-seated errors on which almost all abuses are  
15 founded, the servile worship of eminent men and the irrational dread of innovation.

That he might shake the foundations of these debasing sentiments more effectually, he always selected for himself the boldest literary services. He never came up in  
20 the rear, when the outworks had been carried and the breach entered. He pressed into the forlorn hope. At the beginning of the changes, he wrote with incomparable energy and eloquence against the bishops. But, when his opinion seemed likely to prevail, he passed on to  
25 other subjects, and abandoned prelacy to the crowd of writers who now hastened to insult a falling party. There is no more hazardous enterprise than that of bearing the torch of truth into those dark and infected recesses in which no light has ever shone. But it was the choice  
30 and the pleasure of Milton to penetrate the noisome vapours, and to brave the terrible explosion. Those who most disapprove of his opinions must respect the hardihood with which he maintained them. He, in general, left to others the credit of expounding and defending the  
35 popular parts of his religious and political creed. He

took his own stand upon those which the great body of his countrymen reprobated as criminal, or derided as paradoxical. He stood up for divorce and regicide. He attacked the prevailing systems of education. His radiant and beneficent career resembled that of the god of light 5 and fertility.

“Nitor in adversum ; nec me, qui cætera, vincit  
Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi.”

It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should, in our time, be so little read. As compositions, 10 they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages compared with which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. 15 The style is stiff with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of the *Paradise Lost* has the great poet ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works in which his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyric rapture. It 20 is, to borrow his own majestic language, “a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies.”

We had intended to look more closely at these performances, to analyse the peculiarities of the diction, to dwell at some length on the sublime wisdom of the 25 *Areopagitica* and the nervous rhetoric of the *Iconoclast*, and to point out some of those magnificent passages which occur in the *Treatise of Reformation*, and the *Animadversions on the Remonstrant*. But the length to which our remarks have already extended renders this 30 impossible.

We must conclude. And yet we can scarcely tear ourselves away from the subject. The days immediately following the publication of this relic of Milton appear to

be peculiarly set apart, and consecrated to his memory. And we shall scarcely be censured if, on this his festival, we be found lingering near his shrine, how worthless soever may be the offering which we bring to it. While  
5 this book lies on our table, we seem to be contemporaries of the writer. We are transported a hundred and fifty years back. We can almost fancy that we are visiting him in his small lodging ; that we see him sitting at the old organ beneath the faded green hangings ; that we  
10 can catch the quick twinkle of his eyes, rolling in vain to find the day ; that we are reading in the lines of his noble countenance the proud and mournful history of his glory and his affliction. We image to ourselves the breathless silence in which we should listen to his  
15 slightest word, the passionate veneration with which we should kneel to kiss his hand and weep upon it, the earnestness with which we should endeavour to console him, if indeed such a spirit could need consolation, for the neglect of an age unworthy of his talents and his  
20 virtues, the eagerness with which we should contest with his daughters, or with his Quaker friend Elwood, the privilege of reading Homer to him, or of taking down the immortal accents which flowed from his lips.

These are perhaps foolish feelings. Yet we cannot be  
25 ashamed of them ; nor shall we be sorry if what we have written shall in any degree excite them in other minds. We are not much in the habit of idolising either the living or the dead. And we think that there is no more certain indication of a weak and ill-regulated intellect  
30 than that propensity which, for want of a better name, we will venture to christen Boswellism. But there are a few characters which have stood the closest scrutiny and the severest tests, which have been tried in the furnace and have proved pure, which have been weighed in the  
35 balance and have not been found wanting, which have



been declared sterling by the general consent of mankind, and which are visibly stamped with the image and superscription of the Most High. These great men we trust that we know how to prize; and of these was Milton. The sight of his books, the sound of his name, are 5 pleasant to us. His thoughts resemble those celestial fruits and flowers which the Virgin Martyr of Massinger sent down from the gardens of Paradise to the earth, and which were distinguished from the productions of other soils, not only by superior bloom and sweetness, but by 10 miraculous efficacy to invigorate and to heal. They are powerful, not only to delight, but to elevate and purify. Nor do we envy the man who can study either the life or the writings of the great poet and patriot, without aspiring to emulate, not indeed the sublime works with 15 which his genius has enriched our literature, but the zeal with which he laboured for the public good, the fortitude with which he endured every private calamity, the lofty disdain with which he looked down on temptations and dangers, the deadly hatred which he bore to 20 bigots and tyrants, and the faith which he so sternly kept with his country and with his fame.



## NOTES.

### Page 1.

6. *Secretary*: Secretary of Foreign Tongues to the Council of State, the body which under the Commonwealth carried on the government of the country. Milton held this office from March 15, 1649 to May 1660.

7. *Popish trials*: the trials of Roman Catholics in 1678—9, accused by Titus Oates and other informers of being concerned in a 'Popish Plot,' the objects of which were the murder of the King and the restoration of Roman Catholicism by force.

*Rye-house Plot* (1683) was a plot of some extreme Whigs to murder the King and the Duke of York as they passed the Rye House near Hoddesdon in Hertfordshire on their way from the Newmarket races to London.

10. The full title is: *Johannis Miltoni, Angli, de Doctrina Christiana libri duo posthumi*. A Treatise on Christian doctrine, compiled from the Holy Scriptures alone. By John Milton, translated from the original by Charles R. Sumner M.A., 1825.

11. *Toland*: his life of Milton was published in 1699. Wood, an Oxford antiquarian (1632—95) mentions Milton's unpublished 'Body of Divinity' in his *Fasti Oxonienses*.

12. *Cyriac Skinner*: a London merchant; he had been Milton's favourite pupil, and sonnets XXI. and XXII. are addressed to him.

15—20. Letters discovered by Mr Lemon in 1826 explain the history of the manuscript. Daniel Skinner, a nephew of Cyriac's, who had been acting as Milton's amanuensis, not venturing to publish the treatise or the foreign despatches in

England, put them after Milton's death in the hands of Daniel Elzevir, the famous publisher of Amsterdam. The English government interfered to prevent the publication of the despatches, and Skinner handed both treatise and despatches to the Secretary of State, Sir Joseph Williamson, who on quitting office, left his official correspondence behind him.

17. *the Oxford parliament* met at Oxford on March 21, 1681. The House of Commons was proceeding with a bill for excluding the Duke of York from the succession when it was dissolved on March 28, and the court took advantage of a revulsion of popular feeling to wreak its vengeance on the Whigs for the 'Popish trials,' which had been largely promoted by that party.

23. *Mr Sumner*: C. R. Sumner, afterwards Bishop of Winchester, A.D. 1827—69.

24. *edite*: the word is usually spelt thus by Macaulay. In the sense of preparing a book for publication it appears to date only from the latter part of the XVIIIth century.

## Page 2.

14. *our academical Pharisees*: a Latin prize essay is partly intended to be a test of the essayist's mastery of the Latin language as written by the great Roman authors. He is therefore concerned with the niceties of classical Latin as a Pharisee was with the details of the law of Moses. But in Milton's days Latin was still the language of intercourse among the learned men of Europe, the language in which learned and scientific works were written, and such works were necessarily full of theological or scientific terms unknown to the ancient Romans. The study of Greek and Roman literature was Macaulay's chief pursuit when he was a Cambridge undergraduate, but he would not give any time to the practice of 'composition', i.e. composing in Latin or Greek, or translating passages of English authors into those languages. See also p. 10, lines 15—20.

19. *Quintilian*, Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, a famous orator and teacher of rhetoric at Rome in the latter part of the first century A.D., and author of the *Institutio Oratoria*, a

treatise on the training desirable for an orator. The line is from Milton's xith sonnet.

25. *Cowley*: Abraham Cowley (1618—1667). Among other Latin poems he wrote a work *Of Plants* in six books. Sir John Denham (1615—1668) says of Cowley

To him no author was unknown,  
Yet what he wrote was all his own;  
Horace's wit and Virgil's state  
He did not steal, but emulate,  
And, when he would like them appear,  
Their garb, but not their clothes, did wear.

31. *digest*, a work consisting of extracts distributed under various heads, from Lat. *digerere*, to distribute.

### Page 3.

2. *Arianism*: Arius was a priest of Alexandria in the ivth century who held that God the Son, while possessing a nature similar to that of God the Father, was not coeternal or coessential ('of one substance') with Him. Sumner holds that Milton agrees with Arius in denying that the Son is either coeternal or coessential, but Mark Pattison (*Milton* p. 156) says that Milton 'arranges his texts so as to exhibit in Scriptural language the semi-Arian scheme,' i.e. a scheme which admits that the Son is of one substance with the Father, but denies that he is coeternal.

3. The course of Milton's argument concerning polygamy in chapter x. of the *Christian Doctrine* may be gathered from the following extracts: 'Marriage, therefore, is a most intimate connexion of man with woman, ordained by God....I have not said, in compliance with the common opinion, "of one man with one woman," lest I should by implication charge the holy patriarchs and pillars of our faith, Abraham, and the others who had more than one wife at the same time, with habitual fornication and adultery.' The whole argument is an instance of the especial importance which the Puritans attached to Old Testament models of life.

4. Among the passages bearing on this point may be mentioned

‘in him all his Father shone

Substantially expressed.’ *Par. Lost* III. 139—40.

‘Thee next they sang of all creation, first

Begotten son, Divine similitude &c.’ III. 383—415.

See also III. 62—4, 305—7, 350, V. 603—5, 719—20, VI. 676—718, 745, X. 63—7, 85—6.

6. *history of his life*: the reference is to the design of Milton when he was abandoned by his first wife, Mary Powell, to unite himself to another consort, a daughter of a Dr Davis, who however, was not willing to entertain the design. See Johnson’s *Life*.

8. *eternity of matter*: In Book I. chapter VII. Milton argues against the common opinion that God created the world out of nothing, and maintains that He created it out of matter, and that matter proceeded out of God Himself and therefore is eternal; matter, like the form and nature of the angels, itself proceeded incorruptible from God; and even since the fall it remains incorruptible, as far as concerns its essence.

9. *observation of the Sabbath*: Milton’s views are in strong contrast to those which were generally held by the Puritans: he maintains that the Sabbath was an ordinance of the Mosaic law imposed on Israelites alone, for the express purpose of distinguishing them from other nations; that those who live under the gospel are emancipated from the ordinances of the law in general, and especially from that of the Sabbath, the distinction being abolished which was the special cause of its institution. ‘Under the gospel no one day is appointed for divine worship in preference to another, except such as the church may set apart of its own authority for the voluntary assembling of its members.’ Book II. chapter VII.

16. *Defensio Populi (Anglicani)*, published 1651, was Milton’s answer to the *Defensio Regia* (1649), a vindication of Charles I. and attack on the Commonwealth government, written by Salmasius, a professor of Leyden, at the instance of Charles II. Milton had been directed by the Council of State to answer Salmasius; but Johnson’s statement that he received £1000 for writing it is without foundation.

27. *Capuchins*, an order of mendicant friars named from the cowl (*capuchino*) which they wear.

#### Page 4.

11. *detractors*: among these Macaulay perhaps had Johnson chiefly in view. See Introduction, section IV.

17. *those great men*: the most conspicuous instance is that of Homer; but it is now recognised that the Homeric poems 'belong to the end, and not the beginning, of a poetical epoch,' and therefore we should not regard their author or authors as 'destitute of models.'

30. "*an age too late*": in *Paradise Lost* IX. 21—46 Milton speaks of the heavenly Muse

My celestial patroness, who deigns  
Her nightly visitation unimplored,  
And dictates to me slumbering, or inspires  
Easy my unpremeditated verse:  
Since first this subject for heroic song  
Pleased me, long choosing, and beginning late;  
Not sedulous by nature to indite  
Wars, hitherto the only argument  
Heroic deemed.....  
..... Me, of these  
Nor skilled nor studious, higher argument  
Remains, sufficient of itself to raise  
That name, unless an age too late, or cold  
Climate, or years, damp my intended wing  
Depressed.

The last three lines are severely criticised by Johnson (*Life of Milton*), who always ridiculed the idea that the world was decaying, or that the vigour of the mind varied with times and seasons.

#### Page 5.

12. *article of literary faith*: Macaulay here alludes to the controversy on the comparative merit of ancient and modern writers, which raged in France towards the end of the XVIIIth century, and was introduced into England by Sir William Temple in his *Essay on Modern and Ancient Learning*, in

which he maintained that the oldest books in every kind are the best. See Macaulay's Essay on Temple for an account of the controversy in which the great scholar Bentley shewed that the *Epistles of Phalaris*, which Temple had cited as the oldest and best specimens of letters in existence, were forgeries of a later age.

*most orthodox:* Macaulay is probably alluding to the fact that the opponents of Bentley were Tories, Swift and Atterbury being of the number.

19. *imitative arts:* this is the name given to what we call the fine arts by Aristotle, who regarded the various departments of art as imitations of life. 'Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy also and dithyrambic poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms are all in their general conception modes of imitation....Even dancing imitates character, emotion, and action, by rhythmical movement. The objects of imitation are men in action....Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures; and through imitation he learns his earliest lessons: and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated....Next, there is the instinct for harmony and rhythm.' (Aristotle, *Poetics* I.—IV. Butcher's translation.)

30. *Mrs Marcet*, a writer of popular books on science for the young. Her *Conversations on Political Economy*, published 1816, has been highly praised by later economists.

31. *Montague*, Charles Montague, Chancellor of the Exchequer under William III. Among his great financial measures were the commencement of the National Debt (1693) as a permanent loan in place of temporary loans for short periods, and the foundation of the Bank of England (1694).

32. *Walpole*, Sir Robert Walpole, Prime Minister 1721—42. He is best known as a financier from his restoration of public credit after the bursting of the South Sea Bubble (1721) and his proposed Excise Scheme (1733).

34. *Newton*, Sir Isaac Newton (1642—1727), Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge. His best known work is the *Principia*, in which his discovery of the law of gravitation is set forth.



## Page 6.

8. *Nations...first perceive, and then abstract*: striking instances are given of the absence of general terms in the languages of savages; thus it is said that the aborigines of Tasmania had a separate name for each variety of gum-tree, wattle-tree, etc., but no equivalent for the general expression, a *tree*; when they wished to express that an object was *round*, they said it was *like a ball* or *like the moon*, eking out their scanty vocabulary by the help of a gesture. As instances of the effect with which particular terms may be used in poetry we may refer to Milton's 'muster-rolls' of proper names; see pp. 12—13 and note.

27. *Shaftesbury*, the third Earl of Shaftesbury (died 1713), was grandson of the statesman of Charles II.'s reign. In his works, collected after his death under the title of *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions and Times*, he maintains that men are endowed with a moral sense which enables them to discriminate between virtue and vice without any regard to self-interest.

28. *Helvetius*, a French man of letters and philosopher. In his work *De l'Esprit* (1758) he maintains that men differ from animals only by their physical organisation, and that they are not possessed of free will, their only motive being self-interest, which is based on love of pleasure and fear of pain.

33. *Niobe* weeping for her children (who had been slain to punish her presumption in boasting that they were more numerous and beautiful than the children of the goddess Leto) was a favourite subject with Greek sculptors rather than with painters.

*Aurora*: Macaulay may have been thinking of the masterpiece of Guido, painted on the ceiling of the hall of the Rospigliosi Palace at Rome.

## Page 7.

3. *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices Public Benefits*, by Bernard Mandeville, published in 1723, compares human society to a hive of bees. 'Assuming with the ascetics that human desires were essentially evil, and therefore produced

"private vices," and assuming with the common view that wealth was "a public benefit," he easily shewed that all civilisation implied the development of vicious propensities.' (L. Stephen.)

15. *poetry*: there is something characteristic of Macaulay in this definition, for his own imagination was so active and vivid that, he said, 'my accuracy as to facts I owe to a cause which many men would not confess. It is due to my love of castle-building. The past is in my mind soon constructed into a romance... Precision in dates, the day or hour in which a man was born or died, becomes absolutely necessary. Pepys' diary formed almost inexhaustible food for my fancy. I seem to know every inch of Whitehall: I go in at Hans Holbein's gate, and come out through the matted gallery.' Thus Macaulay retained much of that realistic imagination of childhood, with which he sympathises in the next paragraph. We might doubt whether Macaulay intended to give us here a serious definition of poetry, were it not that he repeats his demand for illusion so often in the Essay. Perhaps the best corrective is to examine the definitions given by other critics; see Introduction, section III.

24—7. Macaulay's quotation of this passage from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (v. 1. 14—17) has led others to cite it, perhaps unjustifiably, as though it were Shakespeare's formal and comprehensive definition of poetry. In the play, Theseus is speaking of the working of the poet's imagination by which he is led to fresh creations; Macaulay rather has in view the effect produced by the poet on the imagination of the reader.

### Page 8.

21. *little poetry*: it would be interesting to learn whether Macaulay continued to hold this view. It is commonly said that the age of Elizabeth and the time of Macaulay's youth are the most fruitful periods in our poetical literature, and both must be accounted ages of enlightenment. Macaulay probably agreed with this estimate with regard to the Elizabethan era—he once spoke of the Elizabethan drama as the highest form of composition of which he could conceive—but not with regard to his own times. Again, in later life he named as the six greatest poets, arranged in the order of his preference, Shakespeare,

Homer, Dante, Aeschylus, Milton, Sophocles; and he would assuredly not have denied the enlightenment of the ages of Shakespeare, Milton, and Sophocles, whilst Dante must certainly be classed among the learned poets.

27. *Rhapsodist*: the Greek rhapsodists were minstrels who recited poems, and especially the Homeric poems, at feasts and on other occasions.

29. *the Mohawks* were a branch of the Iroquois confederation of Red Indian tribes. Their homes were on the upper waters of the Hudson.

### Page 9.

24. *modern ruin*: in the latter half of the XVIIIth and the beginning of the XIXth century, when the popular interest in the Middle Ages was awakening, imitations of ruined castles and abbeys were sometimes constructed in parks and gardens.

25. *great talents*: Macaulay was chary of admiration for contemporary poetry, and especially for the poetry of the so-called Lake School; he may here refer to Wordsworth, or Coleridge, or Southey.

33. *Rabbinical literature*: the name is applied to Jewish works on the Mosaic Law written after the Christian era.

34. *every language*: among the languages in which Milton required his daughters to read to him are mentioned Italian, Spanish, and French; he was also acquainted with Dutch.

### Page 10.

3. *Petrarch* died 1374 A.D. His fame rests on his Italian odes and sonnets, written chiefly in praise of his mistress, Laura. He also wrote Latin poems in hexameter verse: *Africa* (an account of the termination of the second Punic War), also a pastoral, and poetical epistles. From Petrarch may be dated the Revival of Learning in Italy. For *Cowley* see p. 2 line 25 and note.

II. *Augustan age*: this name is sometimes applied to the age of Queen Anne, which its admirers regarded as the classical age of English literature; it is here used in its original sense, to denote the times of the Emperor Augustus, the golden age of

Latin poetry, in which Virgil and Horace lived. Macaulay's judgment on Johnson's Latin scholarship, though not altogether ill-founded, is expressed in too sweeping terms.

15—20. Compare with this attack the somewhat disparaging terms in which Macaulay speaks of modern compositions in Latin prose: p. 2, lines 10—17 and note.

22. *Manso*: Giovanni Battista Mansó, Marquis of Villa, a distinguished Neapolitan man of letters, who had been the friend of the poet Tasso, and in his old age shewed much kindness to Milton during his visit to Naples (1638). Before leaving the city Milton expressed his gratitude in an *Epistle* written in Latin hexameters. Among the laudatory verses which prefaced Milton's *Latin Poems* is the following epigram in which Manso declares that if Milton were not a heretic, he would be not an Angle, but an angel:—

Ut mens, forma, decor, facies, mos, si pietas sic,  
Non Anglus, verum hercle Angelus ipse fores.

23. *mimicry*: Milton's skilful imitation in the *Latin Poems* of the language and style of the Latin poets is here contrasted with his originality in *Paradise Lost*.

24. *Latin poems*: *Joannis Miltoni Londinensis Poemata*, published in 1646, most of them (as the title-page informs us) having been written before the poet had completed his twentieth year. They are arranged in two books, (1) *Elegiarum Liber*, a Book of Elegies, under which title Milton included all poems written in the elegiac metre (alternate hexameters and pentameters); (2) *Sylvarum Liber*, a book of miscellaneous poems, containing the poems written in metres other than the elegiac. Among the poems are poetical epistles, laments on the death of his friend Charles Diodati and of several eminent persons, poems on the 5th of November, a pastoral, and epigrams. Translations of most of these pieces, including the *Epistle* to Manso, will be found among Cowper's *Poems*.

30. *cohort*, body of guards, a cohort being the tenth part of a Roman legion.

32—5. Macaulay doubtless quoted this passage from memory, and it is clear that his marvellous knowledge of the poem (see Introduction, section 1.) did not always reach verbal accuracy. In *Paradise Lost* (IV. 551—4) the lines run:

About him exercised heroic games  
 The unarmed youth of Heaven ; but nigh at hand  
 Celestial armoury, shields, helms, and spears,  
 Hung high, with diamond flaming and with gold.

### Page 11.

3. *panoply*, Greek πανοπλία, a complete suit of armour; the word is used in the original of *Ephesians* vi. 11, 'Put on the whole armour of God.'

13. *numbers*, metre (Latin *numeri*). Recent critics especially insist on the merits of Milton's style: 'If to our English race an inadequate sense for perfection of work is a real danger, if the discipline of respect for a high and flawless excellence is peculiarly needed by us, Milton is of all our gifted men the best lesson, the most salutary influence. No one else in English literature and art possesses the like distinction. Thomson, Cowper, Wordsworth, all of them great poets who have studied Milton, followed Milton, adopted his form, fail in their diction and rhythm if we try them by that high standard of excellence maintained by Milton constantly.' If those who are not acquainted with Latin and Greek 'are ever to gain any sense of the power and charm of the great poets of antiquity, their way to gain it is not through translations of the ancients, but through the original poetry of Milton, who has the like power and charm, because he has the like great style.' (Matthew Arnold.)

14. *parodist*: the reference may be to John Phillips (1676—1708), whose *Splendid Shilling* is a parody on Milton's style.

15—18. The languages which principally influenced Milton's style are Hebrew (which through the 'Authorised Version' of the Bible has affected the diction of most of our writers); Greek; Latin (constantly); Italian (occasionally). Thus in the lines quoted on page 10 Latin usages are recalled by the phrases '*exercised games*,' '*heroic games*' (games befitting the heroes of classical mythology) and by the position of the subject *youth* and of *flaming*.

30. In illustration of this and the following two paragraphs, take the opening lines of the Third Book of the *Iliad*, describing the advance of the Trojan forces to battle: 'Now when they were arrayed, each company with their captains, the Trojans

marched with clamour and with shouting like unto birds, even as when there goeth up before heaven a clamour of cranes which flee from the coming of winter and sudden rain, and fly with clamour towards the streams of ocean, bearing slaughter and fate to the Pygmy men.' (Lang, Leaf and Myers' Translation.) Here we have a simple comparison of the host to cranes, with an allusion to the story, well known to the Greeks, that the cranes waged war with a pygmy race of men in Africa. Contrast with this *Paradise Lost* I. 573-87, describing the countless forces of Satan. Here Milton takes from Homer the figure of the pygmies (small infantry) and then gives one of his 'muster-rolls of names,' calling up in succession the legends of Greece and Britain, and the chivalrous romances of Italy and France:

Never, since created Man,  
Met such embodied force as, named with these,  
Could merit more<sup>1</sup> than that small infantry  
Warred on by cranes: though all the giant brood  
Of Phlegra<sup>2</sup> with the heroic race were joined  
That fought at Thebes and Ilium<sup>3</sup>, on each side  
Mixed with auxiliar<sup>4</sup> gods; and what resounds  
In fable or romance of Uther's son<sup>5</sup>,  
Begirt with British and Armoric knights;  
And all who since, baptized or infidel,  
Jousted<sup>6</sup> in Aspramont<sup>7</sup>, or Montalban<sup>7</sup>,  
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisond<sup>8</sup>;  
Or whom Biserta<sup>9</sup> sent from Afric shore  
When Charlemain with all his peerage fell  
By Fontarabbia<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Would be of greater account. <sup>2</sup> In Macedonia, where the Giants were said to have been vanquished by the gods. <sup>3</sup> The legendary wars of Thebes were a favourite subject of the Greek poets; the siege of Ilium (Troy) by the Greeks is the subject of the *Iliad*.

<sup>4</sup> Aiding (Lat. *auxilium*, aid). <sup>5</sup> Arthur; *romance* refers to Malory's *Morte Darthur*; *Armoric*: of Armorica (Brittany). <sup>6</sup> Tilted. <sup>7</sup> Castles in the South of France, mentioned in Italian chivalrous romances, of which the most famous are Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

<sup>8</sup> A tournament at Damascus is described in *Orlando Furioso*; Morocco was the scene of wars between the Spaniards and Moors; Trebisond, the seat of the Greek emperors, was captured by the Turks in 1461; all three were famous for the contests of baptized and infidel (Mohammedan) warriors.

<sup>9</sup> In Tunis; hence Agramant is said to have started to attack Charlemagne in Spain. <sup>10</sup> Fuenterrabia, on the Bay of Biscay. The story, as given in the French *Chanson de Roland* and elsewhere, is that Roland (not Charlemagne) fell at Roncesvalles (not Fontarabbia). *peerage*: the twelve peers or paladins of Charlemagne.

## Page 12.

1—3. It seems strange to compare the finished style of Milton to a sketch, but by the simile Macaulay simply intends to convey that Milton constantly employs allusions, for the full appreciation of which much learning is needed by the reader. No hearer can be expected to make out a melody from the key-note; but Macaulay's ignorance of music was well known to his friends.

19. *Cassim*: in the story of the *Forty Robbers* Cassim opens the door of the robbers' cave by the words 'Open Sesame!' When he wishes to come out of the cave, he has forgotten the word Sesame, and cries in vain 'Open Wheat!' 'Open Barley!' Sesamé is an oily grain of the order Peduliaceae, from which in Egypt and other Eastern countries cakes were made, and from which an oil is obtained.

22. *Dryden*: in 1673 Dryden, who was now Poet Laureate, went to Milton 'to have leave to put his *Paradise Lost* into a drama in rhyme. Mr Milton received him civilly, and told him that he would give him leave to tag his verses,' referring to Dryden's intention of turning Milton's blank verse into rhymed verse. (Tags were the knobs, often of gold or silver, at the ends of the laces or cords with which dresses were fastened.) The result was *The Fall of Angells and Man in Innocence: An Heroick Opera*. In the preface Dryden speaks of *Paradise Lost* as 'being undoubtedly one of the greatest, most noble, and sublime poems which either this age or nation has produced.' The contrast between the dignity of Milton's style and Dryden's easy, vigorous, witty verse may be gathered from the following lines spoken by Lucifer (cp. *Par. Lost* 1. 242—70 and the passage quoted in the note on p. 26 lines 24—30):

Is this the seat our conqueror has given?  
And this the climate we must change for Heaven?  
These regions and this realm my wars have got;  
This mournful empire is the loser's lot:  
In liquid burnings or on dry to dwell  
Is all the sad variety of Hell.

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1—10. A glance at the note on p. 11 line 30 will shew that to one so widely read as Macaulay a single passage of Milton might call up all the memories enumerated in these lines.

6. *trophied lists*, the tilting-ground adorned with the arms of defeated knights as trophies or tokens of victory; *housings*, horse's trappings; *devices*, heraldic emblems on the knights' shields or crests.

12—13. *L'Allegro*, the cheerful man; *Il Penseroso*, the pensive or contemplative man. It has been said that when Milton gave these titles to the poems, he must have been in the early stage of acquiring a knowledge of Italian, because the latter word should be *pensieroso*, and its meaning is 'anxious'; but it also has the meaning of 'thoughtful,' and the noun from which it is derived is found in the form *pensero* as well as *pensiero*. These poems were published in 1646, and were probably written when Milton, after leaving Cambridge, retired to his father's house at Horton near Windsor. 'Of the two pieces, I believe opinion is uniform; every man that reads them, reads them with pleasure,' says Johnson, whose account of them may be commended to the student. Macaulay's observations are not so much criticisms as expressions of his unbounded admiration of the poems.

25. *drama*, Greek δράμα, a deed, an action, and hence, a drama; *ode*, Greek ὕμνῳ, a song, a lay, an ode, the term in English being usually applied to a lyric which is elevated in tone, is of some length, and has an irregular or complex metre, such as Milton's ode *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*.

28. *the illusion*: if poetry is merely 'the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination' (see pp. 7—9), then it is of capital importance that the dramatist should divert our attention from himself, and fix it on the actions of his characters. No one has done this more completely than Shakespeare, who has kept his own opinions so much in the background that after all the investigations of generations of critics two books have recently been published, one to shew that Shakespeare was a Puritan, and another to shew that he was a Roman Catholic. In this and



the following paragraphs Macaulay appears to take Shakespeare's example as his standard, and if a drama departs from it, to conclude that it is, so far, a lyrical poem rather than a drama. The term lyrical was originally used by the Greeks simply to denote a poem sung to the accompaniment of the lyre; from the usual characteristic of such poems it has been extended to include all simple utterances of the poet's emotions. Mr F. T. Palgrave in his well-known *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* says 'Lyrical has been here held essentially to imply that each Poem shall turn on some single thought, feeling, or situation. In accordance with this, narrative, descriptive, and didactic poems,—unless accompanied by rapidity of movement, brevity, and the colouring of human passion,—have been excluded.'

32. *the tragedies of Byron*: the subjects of Lord Byron's tragedies and dramatic poems were drawn from various sources—*Cain* and *Heaven and Earth* from Scripture, *Sardanapalus* from Assyrian history, *Marino Faliero* and *The Two Foscari* from the history of Venice, *Werner* from a German story; the supernatural enters largely into the plots of *Manfred* and *The Deformed Transformed*; they were published in the years 1817—24. Various as are the subjects of these dramas, yet in all the reader is impressed with the same character—Byron's own—which had arrested attention in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (published 1812—18), describing Harold's wanderings throughout Europe.

34. *Mr Newbery*: John Newbery, who died in 1767, and his son Francis, who died in 1818, were London publishers, famous for their books for the young and for toys such as are described in the text.

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12. *the Ode* from which the Greek drama sprang, was the dithyrambus, sung at the festivals of Dionysus (Bacchus) by a trained band of singers and dancers, called the *chorus*. In course of time a dialogue between the leader of the chorus and a single actor was added to the choral song proper, and Aeschylus of Athens (525—456 B.C.) may be said to have created Greek tragedy about 500 B.C. by introducing a second actor: the two actors, by varying their parts, could represent a complete plot,

while the chorus still took part in the action by giving advice to the two characters on the stage, and moreover still sang choral songs, but only in the intervals of the action—between the acts, as we should say; these choral songs however were now subordinate to the purely dramatic element sustained by the actors.

13. *chorus*: this name denoted the choral song as well as the band of singers.

18—28. *intercourse with the East*: Cyrus captured Sardis 546 B.C.; and the Greek cities in Asia Minor fell under the empire of Persia. Subsequently Athens assisted them in a vain attempt to throw off the Persian yoke, and against overwhelming odds defeated at the battle of Marathon (490) and the sea-fight of Salamis (480) Persian expeditions designed for the conquest of Greece, Aeschylus himself fighting on the Athenian side throughout the wars. The history of this great struggle, which saved the free cities of Greece from Oriental despotism, was written by *Herodotus*, 'the father of history' (born about 484 B.C.). *Pindar* of Thebes, a contemporary of Aeschylus, was one of the greatest of Greek lyric poets; his extant poems consist chiefly of odes celebrating the victories of athletes in the Greek games.

Pindar and Aeschylus were doubtless influenced by the power and magnificence of Persia, which had been displayed before their eyes, and Aeschylus found in the crowning victory of Salamis the subject of his tragedy of the *Persians*; but the literature of Greece was purely national, and owed nothing to Oriental models or inspiration.

31. *his works are absurd*: by this apparently sweeping statement Macaulay does not mean that Aeschylus, regarded purely as a dramatist, is contemptible,—this is clear from the serious, if not altogether favourable, criticism on pp. 25-6;—he means that in some of his tragedies Aeschylus manages the action in such a way that the reader cannot retain the illusion of reality so constantly demanded in this essay; thus in the *Agamemnon*, Clytaemnestra, receiving her victorious husband on his return from the capture of Troy, dwells on the sorrow which she affects to have felt during his absence in a speech of nearly 60 lines; in the *Seven against Thebes*, Polynices, his father-in-law Adrastus king of Argos, and the five Argive chiefs, are preparing to attack the city of Thebes, which is wrongfully

withheld from Polynices by his brother Eteocles; the appearance of the seven warriors as they stand at the head of their bands ready to assault the seven gates of the city is described to Eteocles by a scout in a scene which extends to 300 lines. Clytaemnestra's speech has been praised for the skill with which it reveals her character; the description of the seven chiefs however clearly belongs more properly to descriptive poetry such as the *Iliad* or Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* than to the drama. But above all it must be remembered that Aeschylus was the pioneer in the process of making the Athenian stage really dramatic; that while the *Persians*, the earliest of his extant plays, is 'a magnificent dramatic song of triumph' (Jebb), and the *Seven against Thebes* is rather epic than dramatic in tone, the tragic element is fully developed in his latest plays, the *Oresteia* (B.C. 458), a group of three tragedies on the story of Orestes, to which the *Agamemnon* belongs.

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4. *Sophocles*: his career as a tragic poet extended from 468 B.C. to his death in 405. Against Macaulay's faint praise we may set Prof. Jebb's criticism: 'Sophocles is preeminently the dramatist of human character. He excels in delineating the great primary emotions of our nature.' His finest characters 'are exquisite studies of the human soul, to which the artist has given a typical beauty—expressing what is essentially true in each, marking by a thousand fine touches how intimately he felt the nature which he was drawing, but never using his subtle analysis for the sake of any momentary effect which would mar the repose, disturb the symmetry and clearness, of Tragedy as he conceived it—that is, a work which is a failure unless it has artistic breadth and unity, and can bear to be viewed as we view a temple or a sculpture, judging it to be good, not because it has clever details, but because it is beautiful as a whole.'

9. *Euripides*: his career as a poet extended over the period 455—406 B.C.; he died a few months before Sophocles. He did not, like Sophocles, make a tragedy a perfect whole; he relied rather on the pathos of particular scenes; he abandoned Sophocles' dignity of tone ('stilts,' line 13); his choruses are less closely connected with the dialogues, and his characters

utter long rhetorical or philosophical arguments ('bad sermons,' line 13). In 'crutches' (line 12) the reference is probably to the homeliness of some of his scenes; indeed he introduces kings and heroes limping on crutches in their times of misfortune. He was however the most popular of the tragic poets with succeeding generations; Milton tells us (*Sonnet VIII.*) that

The repeated air

Of sad Electra's poet had the power

To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare,

referring to a story (probably unfounded), told by Plutarch, that when the Spartans captured Athens in 404 B.C. and it was proposed to destroy the city, some verses from Euripides' tragedy of *Electra*, describing the forlorn state of the heroine, were sung at a banquet, and so affected the Spartans that they resolved to spare the city. Some of his merits which appeal to modern readers are summed up in Mrs Browning's lines:—

Our Euripides the human

With his droppings of warm tears,

And his touching of things common

Till they rise to meet the spheres.

But we can quote Macaulay against himself. Amid the business and studies of his later life he found time to read again and again the Greek and Roman classics, and in a letter written in 1835 he says 'I could not bear Euripides at college. I now read my recantation. He has faults undoubtedly. But what a poet! The *Medea*, the *Alcestris*, the *Troades*, the *Bacchae*, are alone sufficient to place him in the very first rank. Instead of depreciating him, as I have done, I may, for aught I know, end by editing him.'

18. *Queen of Fairyland*, Titania, who in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is bewitched into kissing 'the fair large ears' of Bottom (IV. 1. 3).

20. *this veneration for the Athenian*: Hallam sees in the style of *Samson Agonistes* 'sometimes the pompous tone of Aeschylus, more frequently the sustained majesty of Sophocles,' and in the management of the plot he classes it rather with Aeschylus' plays than Sophocles' or Euripides' (*Literature of Europe* IV. 5). The severe judgments on women and the ethical arguments of Samson and the chorus may recall favourite topics

of Euripides, but both are too congenial to Milton to be attributed to imitation.

22. *Samson Agonistes* (Samson the Champion, Greek ἀγωνιστής, a combatant) is the story of Samson's captivity and vengeance on the Philistines dramatised in the form of a Greek tragedy. It was published in 1670. It may be regarded as 'the covert representation of the actual wreck of Milton, his party, and his cause' (Samson standing for the blind Milton, the Philistines for the triumphant Royalists, and Dalila recalling his unhappy experience of marriage). 'The triumphant royalist reaction of 1660 is singular in this, that the agonised cry of the beaten party has been preserved in a cotemporary monument, the intensest utterance of the most intense of English poets—the *Samson Agonistes*.' (Mark Pattison.)

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5. *Comus* was performed in 1634 at Ludlow Castle on the occasion of the Earl of Bridgewater's entering upon his office as Lord President of Wales. Milton wrote it at the request of the famous musician, Henry Lawes, who composed the music to accompany it. It was first published in 1637 by Lawes, Milton's name (doubtless by his own wish) not appearing on the title-page. The Masque was introduced from Italy, and was especially popular in the reign of James I. It was so called because the performers wore masks; it was usually performed at Court, or at a nobleman's house. The characters were generally taken from classical mythology (as in the masque introduced in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Act IV.) or were personified qualities such as 'Love,' and dancing was a prominent feature in the entertainment. A masque 'was like an opera, because so much music was introduced; like a ballet, because there was so much dancing; like a pageant, because the scenery, setting, and costumes were devised on so splendid a scale. It was certainly the forerunner of the opera.' (Verity.)

9—11. The *Aminta* of Tasso (cp. note on p. 11 line 30) was produced at Ferrara in 1573; the *Pastor Fido* (Faithful Shepherd) of Guarini, which was inspired by the *Aminta*, was produced at Turin in 1585; the *Faithful Shepherdess* by John Fletcher, produced in 1610, is partly drawn from the *Pastor Fido*. All

three belong to the class of pastoral dramas, popular in that age, the characters being taken from a conventional shepherd life. The *Faithful Shepherdess* 'contains the germ of *Comus*. Milton has borrowed largely from the imagination of his predecessor; and by quoting the lyric parts of the *Faithful Shepherdess* it would be easy to deceive any one not accurately familiar with the songs of *Comus*.' (Hallam, *Lit. of Eur.* III. 6.)

21. *russet*: a reddish brown (French *rousset*, diminutive of *roux*, red); hence applied to a coarse countryman's dress.

23. *May-day* was the festival of the chimney-sweepers, on which they decked themselves out in tawdry finery.

26. *Comus*: the plot is briefly that Comus, the god of revelry, finds the Lady benighted in the woods, and taking her to his palace seats her in an enchanted chair, from which she cannot rise. Then her brothers, guided by the Attendant Spirit in the guise of the shepherd Thyrsis, rush in and drive out Comus and his rabble (see p. 28, lines 11—19). But the Attendant Spirit tells them in the lines quoted on p. 57 that they should have made Comus a prisoner, and they have to invoke Sabrina, the goddess of the Severn, who appears and sets the Lady free. The parts of the Lady and her brothers were sustained by the daughter and sons of the Earl of Bridgewater. The whole play, and especially the speeches of the Lady and her Elder Brother in praise of chastity have a noble tone of austere virtue very different from that usually found in a masque. These speeches however 'break the illusion,' because if actually beset by such perils, the Lady and her brother would not stay to utter them, and Macaulay seems to grudge the interruption of the plot, slight as that plot is, even by such 'majestic soliloquies.'

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5. *Sir Henry Wotton*, a scholar and diplomatist, who had been ambassador to foreign courts under Elizabeth and James I., but in 1624 was made provost of Eton.

7. *Dorique*: Theocritus and the other pastoral poets of Sicily wrote in the Doric dialect of the Greek language; hence Doric or *Dorique* (as Wotton spells the word) = pastoral.

14—23. In the concluding song of *Comus*, from which

Macaulay here quotes, Milton has modelled himself on the songs of Ariel in the *Tempest*.

20—3. *Elysian*, heavenly, Elysium being in the Greek mythology the abode of the blessed after death; *Hesperides*, the daughters of Hesperus (the Evening Star), who dwelt in blissful islands in the Western Ocean :

There eternal summer dwells,  
And west winds with musky wing  
About the cedarn alleys fling  
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.

*Nard and cassia*: eastern plants from which the ancients prepared costly aromatic oils.

27. *Paradise Regained*: in 1665 Milton retired to Chalfont St Giles to avoid the plague, and gave his young Quaker friend Elwood a manuscript copy of *Paradise Lost*. Elwood, on returning it, said 'Thou hast said much here of *Paradise Lost*; but what hast thou to say of *Paradise Found*?' Milton made no answer, but 'sate some time in a muse.' Within a year however he had written *Paradise Regained*, a poem in four books, describing the Temptation, as, according to Milton's view, it was the triumph of Christ at the Temptation, and not at His Death, which secured human redemption.

29. *parental affection*: so Johnson, who says 'his last poetical offspring was his favourite'; but Phillips, Milton's nephew, on whose words these statements are founded, does not go so far: 'It is generally censured to be much inferior to the other (i.e. *Paradise Lost*), though he (Milton) could not hear with patience any such thing when related to him.'

To the commendations of Macaulay and Johnson we may add the opinions of two poets: Wordsworth thought *Paradise Regained* 'the most perfect in execution of anything written by Milton,' Coleridge considered it 'in its kind the most perfect poem extant.' The unadorned simplicity of the narrative makes this praise the more striking: the first three books do not contain a single simile.

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8. *Paradise Lost*: from the year 1639 Milton had been resolved to produce a great poem, 'a work not to be raised from

the heat of youth or the vapours of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amorist or the trencher-fury of a riming parasite, nor to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her Siren Daughters, but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases. To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs.' After considering many subjects, and hesitating whether the poem should take the form of a tragedy or an epic, he commenced *Paradise Lost* about 1658; it was finished about 1663, and published in 1667.

10. *Dante* was born in 1265, banished from Florence in 1302, and after many years of wandering and exile, died in 1321. Before his days poems (especially love poems) were written in the Tuscan and other Italian dialects; but he by writing the *Divine Comedy* in Tuscan (after some hesitation between Tuscan and Latin) made it one of the great literary languages, and therefore he is called (line 13) 'the father of Tuscan literature.'

The *Divine Comedy*, which Dante called a Comedy (although it is an epic, and not a drama) because it has a happy conclusion, and which others in admiration have called Divine, was written during his exile. Its hundred Cantos are divided into three parts: *Hell*, *Purgatory*, *Paradise*. It represents Dante as traversing the circles of Hell and the Mount of Purgatory under the guidance of Virgil, until Beatrice (whom he had loved, but who died in her youth) descends to meet him and conducts him to Paradise, and shews him its glories.

15, 16. In Egyptian hieroglyphics the figure of a lion, for instance, may represent Phtha, the god of fire, or in later times it may be phonetic, that is, may stand for a syllable or a letter. The picture-writings of the Aztecs on the contrary for the most part present no such derived significations; the event to be recorded is represented pictorially, or a compound name such as 'Bird-mountain' is represented by a picture of a bird and a picture of a mountain.

21. As a corrective to Macaulay's criticism of Dante we



may recommend to the reader Dean Church's *Essay on Dante*. Admitting the grotesqueness and extravagance of which Macaulay gives us an instance in the description of Nimrod, he observes that 'Dante opened that path of freedom and poetic conquest, in which the greatest efforts of modern poetry have followed him—opened it with a magnificence and power which have never been surpassed.' 'The real never daunts him. It is his leading principle of poetic composition, to draw out of things the poetry which is latent in them, either essentially, or as they are portions, images, or reflexes of something greater—not to invest them with a poetical semblance, by means of words which bring with them poetical associations, and have received a general poetical stamp. Dante has few of those indirect charms which flow from the subtle structure and refined graces of language.....Words with him are used sparingly, never in play—never because they carry with them poetical recollections—never for their own sake; but because they are instruments which will give the deepest, clearest, sharpest stamp of that image which the poet's mind, piercing to the very heart of his subject, or seizing the characteristic feature which to other men's eyes is confused and lost among others accidental and common, draws forth in severe and living truth. Words will not always bend themselves to his demands on them; they make him often uncouth, abrupt, obscure. But he is too much in earnest to heed uncouthness; and his power over language is too great to allow uncertainty as to what he means to be other than occasional. Nor is he a stranger to the utmost sweetness and melody of language. But it appears, unsought for and unlaboured, the spontaneous and inevitable obedience of the tongue and pen to the impressions of the mind.'

33. *The ruins*: the passages summarised in this and the following lines will be found in the *Inferno* XII. 4—9, XVI. 94—105, IX. 112—7. The three similes, which occur in the poem in different cantos, are compressed by Macaulay—effectively enough for his purpose—into three successive sentences, brief and designedly monotonous in structure. The last of these similes may be quoted from Cary's translation:—

As where Rhone stagnates on the plain of Arles,  
Or as at Pola, near Quarnaro's gulf,

That closes Italy and laves her bounds,  
 The place is all thick spread with sepulchres;  
 So was it here, save what in horror here  
 Excell'd: for 'midst the graves were scattered flames,  
 Wherewith intensely all throughout they burn'd,  
 That iron for no craft there hotter needs.

## Page 19.

9. *the fiend lies stretched: Par. Lost* I. 192—208.

13. *he stands like Teneriffe:—*

On the other side, Satan, alarmed,  
 Collecting all his might, dilated stood,  
 Like Teneriff or Atlas, unremoved:  
 His stature reached the sky, and on his crest  
 Sat Horror plumed; nor wanted in his grasp  
 What seemed both spear and shield.

*Par. Lost* IV. 985—90.

16.

His visage seem'd  
 In length and bulk, as doth the pine<sup>1</sup>, that tops  
 Saint Peter's Roman fane; and th' other bones  
 Of like proportion, so that from above  
 The bank, which girdled him below, such height  
 Arose his stature, that three Friezelanders  
 Had striv'n in vain to reach but to his hair.

*Inferno* XXXI. 58—64 (Cary's Translation).

28. *Malebolge*, ('Evil Pits') in the Eighth Circle of the *Inferno* are ten concentric trenches, in each of which is placed one special class of deceivers. The horrors of the last *bolgia* or 'ward' are described in *Inferno* XXIX., XXX. Macaulay does not quote the most loathsome details, and he also passes over Milton's appalling list of diseases, a striking instance of his unflinching dignity of rhythm and style, which saves the enumeration from loathsomeness (*Par. Lost* XI. 479—93).

<sup>1</sup> An ancient pine-cone of bronze, which in Dante's time stood in the piazza of St Peter's.

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13. *the second death*: *Inferno* I. 115—8; cp. *Revelation* xxi. 8.

14. *the dusky characters*: inscribed on the portal of Hell:—

Through me you pass into the city of woe:

Through me you pass into eternal pain:

Through me among the people lost for aye.

Justice the founder of my fabric mov'd:

To rear me was the task of power divine,

Supremest wisdom, and primeval love.

Before me things create were none, save things

Eternal, and eternal I endure.

All hope abandon ye who enter here.

*Inferno* III. 1—9.

16—20. *the Gorgon*: in Greek mythology the head of the Gorgon or Medusa turned everyone who looked at it into stone; Dante introduces it in *Inferno* IX. 45—60, where he hides his face to escape the danger. *Barbariccia* and *Draghignazzo* are winged demons in the fifth ward of Malebolge; when the peculators tortured in a lake of boiling pitch emerge, 'as on the brink of water in a ditch the frogs stand only with their muzzles out,' these demons drive them in with forks, and they afterwards pursue Dante (*Inf.* XXII., XXIII.). *Lucifer*, the prince of Hell, stands at the centre of the earth; Dante and Virgil climb down by grasping his shaggy hair until they reach a tunnel which leads them out of Hell to the open air in the southern hemisphere, where is Purgatory, the *mountain of expiation*, encircled by seven terraces, corresponding to the seven deadly sins. When Dante reaches its gate, *the purifying angel* marks on his brow seven P's (for the seven sins—peccata); as he surmounts each of the terraces one of these marks vanishes.

26. *Amadis*: *Amadis de Gaul*, a Spanish prose romance describing marvellous adventures of knights errant, written by Vasco de Lobeyra (died 1403). It was the model of a large number of romances of chivalry, which were satirised by Cervantes in *Don Quixote*.

29. *the work of Swift*: *Gulliver's Travels*, published by Dean Swift in 1726, professes to give an account of the surprising adventures of one Lemuel Gulliver, a surgeon.

Children delight to read his marvellous adventures, but that, it must be remembered, was not the object with which the book was written; the travels to the pygmies of Lilliput and the giants of Brobdingnag are satires respectively on the court of George I., and the politics of Europe; the voyage to Laputa is a satire on philosophers, that to the country of the Houyhnhnms ('the philosophising horses'), a satire on mankind in general. The 'gossip and scandal of the court' therefore had its satirical meaning.

### Page 21.

8. *Milton has succeeded best*: Macaulay's tendency to speak in superlatives of his subject for the moment is illustrated by a reference to his *Criticism on Dante*, published in Knight's *Quarterly Magazine* in Jan. 1824—some 18 months earlier: 'I will frankly confess that the vague sublimity of Milton affects me less than these reviled details of Dante.... This difficult task of representing supernatural beings to our minds, in a manner which shall be neither unintelligible to our intellects nor wholly inconsistent with our ideas of their nature, has never been so well performed as by Dante'; and he cites three instances, one of which is the passage concerning Nimrod (cp. p. 19 lines 15—22). The whole passage in the *Criticism* should be compared with pp. 18—25; the same ground is traversed, but it is the case for Dante, not for Milton, which is being stated.

17. *by eminent names*: especially by Johnson, who complains that Milton's design requires the description of what cannot be described, the agency of spirits; to shew angels acting, he was compelled to invest them with form and matter. 'This, being necessary, was therefore defensible; and he should have secured the consistency of his system, by keeping materiality out of sight. But he has unhappily perplexed his poetry with the philosophy. His infernal and celestial powers are sometimes pure spirit and sometimes animated body,'—for instance, when Satan walks with his lance on the 'burning marle' (I. 292—8), and when he is supported by a gust of rising vapours (II. 932—8), he has a body; when he animates the toad, he is mere spirit, and can penetrate matter at pleasure; when he 'starts up in his own shape,' he has at least a

determined form; and he has a spear and a shield, which he had the power of hiding in the toad, though the arms of the contending angels are evidently material (IV. 800, 819, 990). Milton's own view was that angels were made of spirit, and that spirit was etherealised matter, and was possessed of certain properties, which we call physical; 'the angels, in his view, ate, drank, digested, slept, could fight and be wounded.' (See Stopford Brooke, *Milton* pp. 106—7 and *Par. Lost* v. 404—33.)

20. This and the following paragraph are interesting as an early instance of Macaulay's intolerance of metaphysics and abstract thought, but they are of little importance for his argument. Johnson admitted that Milton was obliged to give his spirits material forms, and the only question is whether the manner in which this material element is represented, is well judged.

### Page 22.

6. *worshipped one invisible Deity*: this view is now quite discredited.

18. *Gibbon*: the five causes stated in chap. xv. of his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (published 1776—88) are: the zeal which the Christians had derived from the Jewish religion, but had purified from its narrow and unsocial spirit; the doctrine of a future life; the miraculous powers ascribed to the church; the pure and austere morals of the Christians; the union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an independent state in the heart of the Roman empire.

30. *the Academy*, the school of philosophers who followed the teaching of Plato and Aristotle; it was so called from the garden near Athens, sacred to a hero named Academus, in which they taught.

*the Portico*, the Stoic school of philosophers, so named from the Stoa (portico or cloister) at Athens in which they taught. The 'stoical' system of morals was generally accepted as the basis of conduct by minds of the higher type in the Roman world at the period of the introduction of Christianity.

31. *the Lictor*: the lictors were the attendants of the chief

Roman officials, such as the consuls and praetors. As a symbol of the official's power, each lictor carried the fasces, a bundle of rods bound round an axe.

*legions*: under the Empire a legion consisted of five or six thousand infantry with 300 cavalry; the number of legions varied from 25 to 30.

33. *its triumph*: this may be dated by the foundation of Constantinople as the new capital of the Roman Empire by Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, in 324 A.D.

34. *Paganism*: so called because the worship of the old gods survived longest among the villagers (*pagani*).

35. *household gods*, the Roman *lares* and *penates*, who probably were originally the spirits of ancestors of the family, worshipped and regarded as protecting deities. *St Elmo*, the patron saint of sailors, who call the electrical light which sometimes appears on the masts and rigging of ships, St Elmo's fire; the sailors of antiquity had attributed it to their patrons, *Castor and Pollux*, the sons of Zeus and Leda. The prominence of St George as a saint in Europe and especially in England appears to date only from the Crusades; the Virgin Martyr St Cecilia is rarely represented as patron saint of musicians before the xvth century, and it was scarcely earlier than the preceding century that Italian painters, departing from more austere models, depicted female saints with 'the fascination of loveliness.'

### Page 23.

18. *metaphysical accuracy*: Macaulay suggests that this would have compelled Milton to make his angels wholly immaterial beings; that he was, however, obliged to make them partly material in order to appeal to the imagination; on the other hand, in order to avoid shocking the reason of philosophers and theologians he made his representation indistinct. But, as we have seen, in his combination of material and immaterial elements Milton was applying accurately his own metaphysical doctrines, nor has he in this part of his subject employed 'his peculiar art of intimating more than he expressed' (p. 24 lines 16—21); if he had wished to do so, we should surely not

have had the passage (v. 404—43) in which Raphael after expounding the physical side of angelic nature, to his viands falls  
with keen dispatch

Of real hunger, and concoctive<sup>1</sup> heat  
To transubstantiate<sup>2</sup>: what redounds<sup>3</sup> transpires  
Through Spirits with ease.

#### Page 24.

35. *Don Juan*: a notorious libertine of Seville. In the opera of Mozart of which he is the subject (*Don Giovanni*), he invites to supper the statue of a man whom he has murdered; the devil who gives the statue the semblance of life carries Don Juan off to hell.

#### Page 25.

1—23. One of the characteristics of the *Divine Comedy* is its intense *human* interest; the multitude of human spirits with whom Dante converses retain (especially in the *Inferno*) much of their earthly characters and interests; his chief guides and instructors (for instance Virgil, Beatrice, St Thomas Aquinas) are human spirits; yet Dante's demons, although their part in the poem is much less important than that of the fallen angels in *Paradise Lost*, inspire most readers with awe, and his angels are regarded as creations of marvellous beauty. It is curious that Macaulay should call them 'good men with wings,' for we can discern in them little corresponding to human character; whereas the character of Milton's Satan (see p. 26 lines 20—30) has been discussed from the days of Dryden downwards, perhaps more fully than any character in English literature except Hamlet's, and Mr Stopford Brooke is almost prepared to say that in Beelzebub we may trace the lineaments of Strafford (*Milton* p. 93).

5. *Farinata*, who, while standing in his burning tomb, converses with Dante about the affairs of Florence (*Inf.* x.), was the Florentine leader of the Ghibelline party. When the Ghibellines defeated the Guelphs of Florence at Monte Aperto in 1260 A.D. and proposed to destroy utterly the city of Florence, Farinata intervened and prevented them.

<sup>1</sup> digestive.

<sup>2</sup> assimilate.

<sup>3</sup> the unassimilated residue.

6. *auto da fé* 'act of faith' (Portuguese), the name given to the burning of heretics by the Inquisition.

8. *Beatrice*: see note on p. 18 line 10. Cantos XXX., XXXI. of the *Purgatorio* describe how Beatrice, who has descended from Paradise to the earthly Paradise on the summit of the Mount of Purgatory, meets Dante. The student should read these Cantos before accepting the statement that they owe their charm to feelings which would be equally suitable to the streets of Florence.

18. *fee-faw-fum*: attempts to play on the feelings of the reader by terrifying descriptions. Macaulay takes the word from the nursery-rhyme:

Fee-faw-fum!

I smell the blood of an Englishman.

*Tasso*: cp. note on p. 11 line 30. The reference is to his *Gerusalemme Liberata* (Jerusalem Liberated), describing the First Crusade; it was published in 1581. The 14th Canto describes an assembly of evil spirits who meet in council to thwart the Crusade.

19. *Klopstock*: his *Messias*, a lengthy German poem in 20 books, describing Christ's Life, Death and Ascension, was completed in 1773.

24. *demons*: the Greek word *δαίμων*, a divinity, includes, besides the gods, supernatural beings of lower rank, such as nymphs. It acquired the sinister sense in which it is used in p. 24 line 34 from its use by the Christian Fathers, who (like Milton) regarded the heathen deities not as creations of men's minds, but as evil spirits who had deluded mankind.

34. *God of Light*, Apollo; *Goddess of Desire*, Aphrodite (corresponding to the Latin Venus). Macaulay selects the two deities whose attributes are the most opposite to the sombre religions of the East.

### Page 26.

1. *Osiris*, the chief god of ancient Egypt, worshipped under the form of a bull.

2. *seven-headed idols*: many of the Indian idols, including those representing Brahma, are many-headed.

6. *Titans*, the children of Urānos and Ge (Heaven and



Earth); they aided Cronos to depose Uranus from the throne of the gods.

*Furies*, the goddesses who exacted vengeance for blood-guiltiness; the concluding play of Aeschylus' trilogy of the *Oresteia* (see note on p. 14 line 31) is called by their name (Eumenides); in it they claim to execute vengeance on Orestes, who has slain his mother Clytaemnestra, because she has murdered his father Agamemnon; they suffer the question to be submitted to the famous Athenian court of Areopagus under the presidency of the goddess Athēnē: Orestes is acquitted.

7. *Promētheus*, the son of the Titan Iapētus. Zeus (Latin Jupiter) had wrested the sovereignty of the gods from Cronos, and was angered with mankind. Prometheus stole fire from Zeus, and gave it to men, and taught them many useful arts. The *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus represents him as chained to a cliff in the Caucasus and tortured by command of Zeus, who wishes to extort from him a secret (namely, that one of the sons of Zeus is fated to dethrone him, and set Prometheus free); but neither threats nor tortures can force Prometheus to utter it. Satan resembles him in his unbroken resistance, but in the *Prometheus* our moral sympathies are not with the powers of Heaven, but with their opponent.

24—30. See *Paradise Lost* I. 44—70, 221—38; VI. 320—53 for the agonies which Satan had to endure; for his unconquerable spirit see his speeches in Book I. (84—124, 242—70, 315—30, 622—62), from the first of which we quote the following lines:

What though the field be lost?

All is not lost: the unconquerable will,  
And study of revenge, immortal hate,  
And courage never to submit or yield:  
And what is else not to be overcome?  
That glory never shall his wrath or might  
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace  
With suppliant knee, and deify his power—  
Who, from the terror of this arm, so late  
Doubted his empire—that were low indeed;  
That were an ignominy and shame beneath  
This downfall.

Dryden suggested that Satan, and not Adam, was Milton's

real hero, and many have agreed with this view: his gradual debasement and his degradation in X. 504—83 to 'a monstrous serpent on his belly prone,' cannot efface in their minds the greatness of his character in the earlier books.

### Page 27.

2. *beggars for fame*: probably Byron is intended; see p. 14 lines 3—6.

10—33. This picture of Dante is greatly overdrawn. His melancholy is undeniable, and it is not surprising; in the years to which the *Divine Comedy* belongs he was suffering almost all Milton's disadvantages except blindness, and he was moreover a lonely wandering exile. But the inborn gloom with which Macaulay charges him is inconsistent with the loving observation of humble life and of all nature to its minutest details shewn in his countless similes and with his generous admiration of what is noble in art and letters and history.

Macaulay has made many references to the *Inferno*, and a few to the *Purgatorio*; he now approaches for the first time the *Paradiso* in lines 26, 27; the words 'tinges with its own livid hue etc.' are a striking bit of rhetoric, but as a description of the *Paradiso* nothing could be more untrue.

22. *Hebrew poet*: the quotation is from *Job* x. 22.

28. *the portraits*: the numerous portraits of Dante which have come down to us are the subject of much discussion. They clearly do not all represent the same person, and some authorities hold that there is not satisfactory evidence to connect any one of them with Dante. The most famous is a fresco in the palace of the Bargello at Florence, attributed to Dante's famous contemporary, Giotto.

35. *like Dante*: see note on p. 18 line 10. Milton had been unhappy in his marriage with his first wife, his second wife had died within a year of their marriage (see p. 29 line 32); the Restoration had deprived him of his secretaryship (see note on p. 1 line 6).

### Page 28.

3. *the great men*: members of the Council of State, which appointed Milton Secretary of Foreign Tongues in 1649. Among the dead we may name Cromwell, Ireton, Bradshaw,

whose bodies were disinterred and hanged at Tyburn. Ten regicides were executed at the Restoration, nineteen imprisoned for life: nineteen had fled to foreign countries.

10. *bellman*: in the XVIIIth century a London bellman was a night watchman, who carried a bell, to give alarm if a fire broke out. Once a year, when he was collecting payment for his services from the householders, he distributed a paper of doggrel verses, which in point of literary merit were of course contemptible.

13. *the rabble of Comus* were human beings to whom by means of a magical potion he had given brutish in place of human heads; see *Comus*, 68—77:

Soon as the potion works, their human count'nance,  
The express resemblance of the gods, is changed  
Into some brutish form of wolf or bear,  
Or ounce or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,  
All other parts remaining as they were.  
And they, so perfect in their misery,  
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,  
But boast themselves more comely than before,  
And all their friends and native home forget,  
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.

24. *proscription*: in the civil wars of the later Roman republic the triumphant party on several occasions 'posted up' (Latin *proscribere*) a list of its opponents, whose lives and property were thereby forfeited; hence the word denotes the persecution of a defeated party. It had been proposed that Milton should be one of those excluded from the benefit of the Indemnity Act passed in 1660, but the proposal was not carried out, and the only proceedings actually taken against him were that he was kept in custody for some months, and that all copies of his *Defensio Populi Anglicani* (see p. 3 line 16) and *Iconoclastes* were by Royal Proclamation ordered to be given up and to be burnt by the hangman. It is surprising that he escaped so lightly; and one account tells us that this was due to the exertions of the poet Andrew Marvell, another attributes it to the services of the poet laureate, Sir William Davenant, who is said to have owed his life under the Commonwealth to a similar intercession of Milton on his behalf.

27. *His temper*: against this statement have been urged the harshness with which he is said to have treated his daughters, and the violence of his political tracts, such as the *Defensio Populi Anglicani*. With regard to the latter Mr Stopford Brooke says: 'The ferocity, the coarseness, the odious personalities, were characteristic of the controversial writings of the day, and Milton, unworthy of his own dignity, but with great intellectual force, is more ferocious, more coarse, more personal, and descends to more brutal detail than any of his fellows and opponents.'

30. *his travels*: Johnson in his *Life* gives an account of his travels (1638—9) to Paris and Italy; he intended to visit Sicily and Greece, but hearing of the political troubles at home, he returned by way of Geneva; he visited Grotius, Galileo, Manso (see p. 10 line 22 and note) and other learned men, and after the fashion of the day exchanged complimentary verses in Latin or Italian with some of them.

35. *hovel*: after the Restoration he lived in modest retirement, yet in comfort; at his death in 1674 he left the then considerable sum of £1500.

#### Page 29.

7. *Theocritus* of Syracuse, the writer of Greek pastorals, flourished about 270 B.C. (cp. note on p. 17 line 7); *Ariosto*, author of *Orlando Furioso*, an Italian poem of chivalrous romance, published in 1516. It was so popular that more than 60 editions of it were published in the xvith century.

8—11. *sense of the pleasantness of external objects*: see for instance *Par. Lost*, IV. 131—71, 205—68, 325—34, 634—58; V. 291—306, 331—49. The following sentence (lines 11—15) may be regarded as an instance (like p. 27 lines 24—7) of the sacrifice of sense to the demands of rhetoric.

23. *critics*: as for instance Johnson, who dismisses them with the remark that 'of the best it can only be said that they are not bad; and perhaps only the eighth' [*When the assault was intended to the City*] 'and the twenty-first' [*To Cyriack Skinner*] 'are truly entitled to this slender commendation.' It is only necessary to add to Macaulay's criticism that Milton was an innovator in making the sonnet the means of expressing the

thoughts suggested by passing events; before his time the subject of the sonnet had usually been love, especially unsuccessful love. In form, the sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines; there are two main types, named respectively, from the most famous poets who employed them, the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean. In the Petrarchan sonnet there is a somewhat complex arrangement of lines, the effect being to divide the first eight lines (the octave) from the last six (the sestet); at the end of the octave the sonnet reaches its climax in thought and rhythm, and there is a pause. Milton's sonnets belong mainly to the Petrarchan type, except that he often does not observe the pause, but carries on the thought and rhythm without break into the sestet. In the Shakespearean sonnet the arrangement of lines is simpler, and the last two lines rhyme, and the climax of the thought is concentrated in them; hence the sonnet ends with a sort of 'epigrammatic point' (line 24).

25. *Filicaja*, a Florentine poet of the latter part of the XVIIIth century. His famous sonnet addressed to Italy is freely translated (not in sonnet form) by Byron, *Childe Harold*, IV. xlii—iii.

26. *Petrarch*: see page 10 line 3 and note. His sonnets are remarkable for grace and finish, rather than freshness or depth of feeling.

29—34. The simplicity of the *Sonnets* and the varied light which they throw on Milton's career make them especially suitable for study by those who are not at present prepared to study Milton's longer poems. To such students Mr Verity's edition may be recommended. Five of the twenty-three sonnets are in Italian. They were written at various dates from 1630 to 1658, but chiefly in the period when controversy diverted Milton's pen from any longer effort in verse. *Sonnet XVI.* is addressed to Cromwell after the victory of Worcester; *VIII.* 'When the assault was intended to the City' after Edgehill (1642); *II.* records his feelings on reaching the age of twenty-three, while 'my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th'; in *XIX.* he laments that his blindness prevents him from using 'that one talent which is death to hide,' but remembers that 'they also serve who only stand and wait'; *XI.* and *XII.*, in answer to attacks on his treatise *Tetrachordon*, shew his less amiable side;

XXIII. describes a dream in which his second wife, 'my late espoused saint,' appeared to him.

### Page 30.

1. *Greek Anthology*, a collection of epigrams and brief lyrical poems by many Greek poets, ranging in date from about 500 B.C. to 500 A.D.

2. *Collects*: a collect is a form of prayer peculiar to the Western Church: it is so called because in it the priest *collects* and utters the petitions of the people. A complete collect consists of (1) the invocation, (2) the reason on which the petition is to be founded, (3) the petition, (4) the benefit hoped for as a result, (5) a memorial of Christ's mediation.

3. *The noble poem, Sonnet XVIII.*:—

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;  
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,  
Forget not: in thy book record their groans  
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold  
Slain by the bloody Piemontese, that rolled  
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans  
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow  
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway  
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow  
A hundredfold, who, having learnt thy way,  
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

In 1665 there was a great massacre of the Waldenses or Vaudois, a sect which had been driven out of the south of France (see note on p. 53 line 16), and had settled in Piedmont. Cromwell interceded on their behalf, and the Duke of Savoy was prevailed on to abandon the persecution. The correspondence on the subject was carried on by Milton as Latin Secretary.

18. *His public conduct*: at this point we quit the literary and take up the historical portion of the essay.

22. In the ancient religion of Persia *Oromasdes*, or Ormuzd, was the power of Light and Good, *Arimanes*, or Ahriman, the

power of Darkness and Evil; between the two a fierce conflict raged.

28. *American forests*: see p. 46 line 4 and note.

29. *Greece*: its final conquest by Rome took place in 146 B.C. Among later conquerors were the Goths, Slavonic tribes, Venice, and lastly the Turks. Macaulay wrote in the middle of the War of Independence (1821—9). Lord Byron, who went to assist the Greeks in their struggle, had died in the previous year.

### Page 31.

14. *Mrs Hutchinson*: her life of her husband, Colonel Hutchinson, one of the regicides, was written after the Restoration, but not published till 1806. Its chief merit lies in the picture which it gives of Puritan character and family life.

*May*: Thomas May bases his *History of the Long Parliament* (of which he was a Secretary) on official manuscripts and the newspapers, keeping himself and his judgment on affairs in the background. His history was published in 1647.

16. *Ludlow*: Edmund Ludlow, a regicide and from 1650 lieutenant-general of the horse in Ireland, where after Ireton's death he had practically the chief command; he refused however to acknowledge Cromwell's government after the extension of the Long Parliament (1653). 'What would you have?' asked Cromwell; Ludlow replied 'That which we fought for, that the nation might be governed by its own consent.' His *Memoirs* (published 1698—9) are an honest but prejudiced representation of the views of the irreconcilable republicans.

18. *Oldmixon*, a writer of historical works and pamphlets; Clarendon's *History* was attacked by him, especially in his *History of England during the Reign of the Royal house of Stuart*, the first volume of which was published in 1729.

19. *Catharine Macaulay* (born Sawbridge) was a poetical writer of strong republican views. The first volume of her *History of England from the Accession of James I. to the elevation of the House of Hanover* was brought out in 1763. Her writing is often vigorous and animated, although of little historical value. She is perhaps best remembered now as the lady whose belief in the equality of mankind Dr Johnson put to

the proof by saying, 'Madam, I am now become a convert to your way of thinking. Here is a very sensible, civil, well-behaved fellow-citizen, your footman; I desire that he may be allowed to sit down and dine with us.'

22. *Clarendon*, Edward Hyde, who had been one of the chief opponents of the Presbyterian party in the Long Parliament, and Charles II.'s minister during his exile. At the Restoration he was made Earl of Clarendon and Lord Chancellor, and was the chief minister of Charles II. until 1667, when he was impeached, and fled to France. His *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, published in 1702—3, long after his death, was no doubt really composed as a justification of the actions of the Royalists.

26. *Hume*, David Hume, a Scotch writer on philosophy, published in 1754 a *History of Great Britain* in the reigns of James I. and Charles I. This work was subsequently extended, and by 1761 he had completed the *History of England* from the Norman Conquest to the Revolution. Hume owed his former popularity as a historian to the ease, elegance and picturesqueness of his narrative; he had not made the researches indispensable in a historian. With regard to his 'hatred of religion' (cp. line 28) Sir James Mackintosh observed that Hume had in his early life in Scotland 'conceived an antipathy to the Calvinistic divines, and his temperament led him at all times to regard with disgust and derision that religious enthusiasm or bigotry with which in his opinion the spirit of English freedom was inseparably associated.'

### Page 32.

4. *primary principles*: such a principle would be that a government is bound to secure or endeavour to secure for its subjects the benefits of safety, order, justice, and freedom; or that a government is bound to rule according to the wishes of the nation (see note on p. 31 line 16); or again the very different principle of the extreme Royalists, that the King rules by Divine Right, and has an absolute claim on the Passive Obedience of his subjects.

7. *vantage*, a shortened form of *advantage*; in a tournament



*vantage ground* was a position which gave the tilter an advantage, especially of sun or wind (line 12).

10. *to joust*, or just (Spanish *justar*), to tilt, to encounter one's opponent at a tournament.

13—16. See Introduction, section v.

21. *Laud*, William Laud, Charles I.'s principal adviser in matters relating to the Church from 1629—40; he became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633; in 1640 the Long Parliament committed him to the Tower; he was impeached in 1644, and beheaded in 1645. Against Macaulay's contemptuous description we may set the more balanced estimate of Gardiner: In doctrine, 'Laud carried on the teaching of Cranmer and Hooker. He held that the basis of belief was the Bible, but that the Bible was to be interpreted by the tradition of the early church, and that all doubtful points were to be subjected, not to heated arguments in the pulpits, but to sober discussion by learned men. His mind, in short, like those of the earlier English reformers, combined the Protestant reliance on the Scriptures with reverence for ancient tradition and with the critical spirit of the Renaissance. He, like the Parliamentarians, was convinced that there could be but one Church in the nation. As they sought to retain their hold on it by the enforcement of uniformity of doctrine, Laud sought to retain his hold on it by enforcing uniformity of worship. To do this he attempted to put in force the existing law of the Church as opposed to the existing practice' (*i.e.* the rejection of ceremonies by the Puritans). The inquisitorial methods of carrying out this policy and the severe sentences of the Star Chamber exasperated the Puritans against Laud.

33. *the present year*: See Introduction, section v.

### Page 33.

11, 12. *Their labour*: the quotation is from Satan's exhortation to Beelzebub, *Par. Lost* I. 164—5, 'Our labour must be &c.' In this and the following paragraphs we have a vigorous piece of partisan writing. Seizing on the apparent inconsistency of those who were inclined to disparage William III.'s English policy, while praising his treatment of Ireland, he can

only reconcile this inconsistency by assuming that their *prototype* or original model is to be found in Satan.

17. *One sect:* the Roman Catholics. The Toleration Act (1689) practically secured to the Protestant Dissenters the right of public worship, but Roman Catholics were still subject to the severe Acts of Charles II. (usually known as the Clarendon Code) against those who did not conform to the English Church. In Ireland they were subject to a much more real and active persecution.

19. *One part of the empire:* Ireland. When the last efforts of the Irish Catholics on behalf of James II. ended with the fall of Limerick in 1691, they were granted by the Treaty of Limerick the privileges which they had enjoyed in the reign of Charles II., when their religious rites had been permitted within certain limits. William however found it impossible to carry out this undertaking, so determined was the Irish Parliament, from which Catholics were excluded, on persecution.

24—25. *to vindicate*=to redeem (Latin *vindicare*, to set free, emancipate); *to palliate*=to cloak, disguise, weaken the force of (Latin *pallium*, a cloak). Both words are naturally limited to benevolent actions, but as evil is, according to Macaulay, the Tories' good, he applies the words to their malevolent actions.

26. *Naples, Spain:* Ferdinand I. of Naples, and Ferdinand VII. of Spain had in 1820 to meet a rising of their armies against their harsh government; in each country a democratic constitution was established. Austria called on the Great Powers to put down such a dangerous example; Castlereagh, the English Foreign Secretary, refused to assist Austria, which in 1821 restored Ferdinand I.; Ferdinand VII. was restored by a French army in 1823.

*South America:* in 1819—25 the Spanish colonies in South America had thrown off the yoke of Spain under the leadership of Bolivar (see p. 46 line 4 and note). Canning, who had succeeded Castlereagh as Foreign Secretary, displeased with the intervention of France in Spain, acknowledged the independence of the colonies, saying 'I have called a new world into existence to redress the balance of the old.'

29. *Legitimacy:* the 'Holy Alliance' of the sovereigns of

Russia, Austria, Prussia, and other continental states was formed in 1815 to resist any rising against the government of the legitimate monarch of a country. As we have seen in the preceding notes, the English Tory Cabinet refused to aid these powers, and finally opposed them. The principle of legitimacy, aimed against free institutions and also against monarchs such as Napoleon, who did not belong to an ancient line of sovereigns, resembled the XVIIIth century doctrine of Divine Right (see note on p. 32 line 4).

31. *Somers*, John Somers, a barrister who first attracted attention by his speech in defence of the Seven Bishops; he quickly rose to be a leader of the Whig Party; the Declaration of Right was framed by him; in 1697 he was made Lord Chancellor and raised to the peerage. His ability as a statesman and a lawyer won him the confidence of William; he was one of the 'Junto,' that knot of Whig statesmen, who formed the first united party ministry in English history; from this ministry the rise of the Cabinet system is traced.

*Shrewsbury*, Charles Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, one of the seven leading men who in 1688 signed the secret appeal to the Prince of Orange, inviting him to come over to England. He was a Secretary of State under William in 1689—90, and Keeper of the Seal in 1694, when he was created a duke.

### Page 34.

3. *memory*: this is the toast of the Orangemen: 'To the glorious and immortal memory of King William III.'

6. *Ferdinand the Catholic*, Ferdinand VII. of Spain: see note on p. 33 line 26. 'The Catholic King' is a title of the Kings of Spain.

*Frederic the Protestant*, Frederic William III. of Prussia, a member of the Holy Alliance; he reigned 1797—1840.

8. *construction*, interpretation of their conduct.

15. *Goldsmith's Abridgment*: in addition to the works to which he owes his fame (such as his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield*, his comedy *She Stoops to Conquer*, his poem *The Deserted Village*) Oliver Goldsmith (1728—74) wrote many works, such as the *History of England*, as mere task-work for the booksellers.

27. *famous resolution*: the resolution, declaring the throne vacant, passed by the House of Commons on Jan. 28, 1689: 'King James II., having endeavoured to subvert the constitution of the kingdom by breaking the original contract between king and people, and by the advice of Jesuits and other wicked persons having violated the fundamental laws and having withdrawn himself out of the kingdom, has abdicated the government, and the throne has thereby become vacant.' It would not have suited Macaulay's purpose to quote this resolution at length, first, because the Jesuits are expressly mentioned in it, and secondly, because the reasons which it assigns are inconsistent, as he afterwards shewed in chap. x. of his *History*: 'The one beauty of the resolution was its inconsistency. There was a phrase for every subdivision of the majority. There were doubtless many fervent Protestants who were pleased with the censure cast on the Jesuits &c.' It must be remembered that almost all James' illegal and tyrannical acts had for their object the introduction of Roman Catholicism.

### Page 35.

11. *the Declaration of Right*: the document by means of which the Convention Parliament offered the throne to William and Mary. 'In order that the questions which had been in dispute between the Stuarts and the nation might never again be stirred, it was determined that the instrument by which the Prince and Princess of Orange were called to the throne, and by which the order of succession was settled, should set forth the fundamental principles of the constitution. The Declaration began by recapitulating the crimes and errors which had made a revolution necessary' (Macaulay *Hist.* ch. x.). Of this recapitulation we may regard p. 35 lines 14—22 as a summary.

26. *so many reforms*: by the time of Strafford's execution (May, 1641) the king had given his assent to an act declaring that the Long Parliament should not be dissolved without its own consent, to Acts abolishing the courts of Star Chamber and High Commission, declaring ship-money illegal, limiting the king's claims on forests, forbidding the levying of Tonnage and Poundage or impositions without a grant from Parliament, &c. 'Taking these Acts as a whole, they stripped the Crown of the

extraordinary powers which it had acquired in Tudor times, and made it impossible for Charles legally to obtain money to carry on the government without the good will of Parliament, or to punish offenders without the good will of juries.' (Gardiner.)

30. *Star Chamber*, a court consisting of certain members of the Privy Council and two judges, employed by Henry VII. to punish nobles who were guilty of interfering with the course of justice. Under Charles I. it was a mere instrument in the king's hand, all the Privy Councillors being now members of it, and it was used to put down his opponents.

### Page 36.

2. *free parliament*: James II. had prorogued Parliament in November 1685, and dissolved it in July 1687. He then took steps to secure not a free, but a packed Parliament; finding however that no Parliament was likely to sanction the Declaration of Indulgence, he desisted. In November 1688, when William had landed, and James was setting out to Salisbury to oppose him, a number of peers petitioned him for a free and legal Parliament. He replied that he passionately desired it, and would call it as soon as William had left the island. 'But how,' said he, 'can a Parliament be free when an enemy is in the kingdom, and can return near a hundred votes?'

5. *twenty years*: the first war against France lasted 8 years (1689—97); if we regard the whole period to the close of the War of the Spanish Succession (1702—13) as one of warfare, we get 24 years. The intestine wars are the revolt of the Highlands (Battle of Killiecrankie, 1689), the war in Ireland, ending with the fall of Limerick (1691), and perhaps we may extend the period to include the First Jacobite Rising (1715).

6. *a standing army*: the military despotism of the Commonwealth had made a standing army so unpopular that by the Declaration of Right the king could not keep a standing army without consent of Parliament; this consent however was extorted from Parliament by the necessities of William's war with France, which also led to the foundation of the *national debt* (see note on p. 5 line 31).

19. *Convention*: when James II. had embarked for France (December, 1688) William summoned a Convention or Convention

Parliament, which differed from a Parliament only in that it had not been summoned by a king.

21. *Petition of Right*: this was presented to the king by his third Parliament in 1628; it condemned illegal acts in the past, and asserted the following four points: 1. that no one should be compelled to pay loan, benevolence, or tax without consent of Parliament; 2. that no subject should be imprisoned without cause shewn; 3. that soldiers and mariners should not be billeted on the people without their will; 4. that no commission should be issued in time of peace to try subjects by martial law. Charles was most unwilling to give his consent, and at first returned an evasive reply, but being in great straits for money to fit out a fresh expedition to relieve the Huguenots at Rochelle, he finally added to the petition the usual words giving the royal consent to petitions: *soit droit fait comme est désiré* (let right be done as is desired). Gardiner regards the Petition of Right 'as second in importance only to the Great Charter itself. Alike in the XIIIth and the XVth century the kingly power had been established on the ruins of an aristocracy bent on the nullification of government in England. Alike in the XIIIth and the XVth century the kingly power was called to account as soon as it was used for other than national ends. Like the Great Charter the Petition of Right was the beginning, not the end, of a revolution.'

31. *more than ten years*: in 1629 the king dissolved Parliament, and governed without a Parliament until 1640. His Fourth Parliament ('the Short Parliament') was dissolved before it had sat a month. His Fifth Parliament ('the Long Parliament') was summoned towards the close of the same year, as the king needed a subsidy in order to pay the Scottish army which had invaded the northern counties.

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3. *le Roi le veut*: 'the king wills it'—the form in which the royal assent is expressed to a bill which has passed the Houses of Parliament.

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5. *Vandyke*: Antonio van Dyck of Antwerp lived mostly in England from 1632 to his death in 1641. He was the great

portrait painter of Charles I.'s court, and the costume worn by his sitters is called a Vandyke dress. He was knighted by Charles I., whose portrait he repeatedly painted; one of these portraits, sold by the Long Parliament and re-purchased by the nation in 1885 for £17,500, is in the National Gallery. A cut from another portrait is given in Gardiner's *Student's History*, vol. II. p. 504.

8—17. Macaulay, bred in a family which had sacrificed much for a great public cause—the abolition of the slave trade—had throughout life a high ideal of the devotion due from the citizen to the state. The force with which he depicts the civic heroism of antiquity is a striking merit of his *Lays of Ancient Rome*.

18—33. Compare the quotation from Gardiner in the note on p. 36 line 21.

33. *release*: abandonment of his claims.

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9. *Strafford*, Thomas Wentworth, who with Eliot had led the House of Commons in 1628, but hesitated to force the Petition of Right on the king, as he did not wish Parliament to be supreme. The king appointed him President of the Council of the North, and in 1632 Lord Deputy of Ireland, which he governed with great vigour, requiring all officials to live up to his motto of 'Thorough,' by which he meant a thorough devotion to the service of the king and the state. In 1641 the Commons, regarding him as the king's ablest adviser in his arbitrary government, and fearing him because he had formed an army in Ireland, impeached him; subsequently however they proceeded against him by Bill of Attainder, which the Lords accepted. Charles reluctantly gave his assent, although he had promised Strafford that not a hair of his head should be touched. Strafford 'attempted to maintain the Elizabethan constitution long after it was possible to maintain it, and when the only choice lay between absolute government and Parliamentary supremacy. Yet he stands strangely near to one side of the modern spirit. Alone amongst his generation his voice was always raised for practical reforms.' (Gardiner.)

11. *Major-generals*: in 1655 Cromwell found difficulty in

enforcing the collection of taxes, and was also in danger from Royalist and from republican plots. He therefore 'abandoned all pretence of constitutional government. He divided England into ten military districts, over each of which he set a *Major-general*, with arbitrary powers for maintaining order, and by a mere stroke of the pen, ordered a payment of 10 per cent. on the incomes of Royalists.' (Gardiner.)

13. *upstarts...public plunder*: from 1645 'Parliament had supplied itself with money by forcing Royalists to compound, that is to say, to pay down a sum of money, without which they were not allowed to enjoy their estates. The system, harsh in itself, was not fairly carried out. Members of Parliament took bribes, and let the briber off more easily than others who neglected to give them money.' (Gardiner.)

16. *Quakers*: their founder, George Fox, whose religious enthusiasm appears to have been mingled with mental aberration, records in his *Journal* that one of his friends was divinely moved to go naked during several years to market places, and to the houses of gentlemen and clergymen. It was during the Commonwealth that he and his friends first attracted attention. At the same period arose the *Fifth-Monarchy-men*, declaring that king Jesus was coming at once to reign on earth; his monarchy was called the Fifth Monarchy as succeeding those of Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

19. *Agag*: see 1 *Samuel* xv. 8—33.

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12. *prohibited free discussion*: in 1626 Charles issued a proclamation, forbidding discussion on controverted points of doctrine. The sentences of the Star Chamber and High Commission also stifled free discussion.

25. *the Xeres*: Macaulay appears to speak of Xeres (now usually spelt Jerez) as a river; it is of course the town of the district N.E. of Cadiz which produces *sherry*, which word is a corruption of Xeres.

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10. *Ariosto*: see note on p. 29, line 7. The story is told in *Orlando Furioso*, Canto XLIII.



## Page 42.

25. *celebrated proceeding*: a phrase is picked which represents the execution as a calm judicial act, not as an infamous deed of violence,—in which light it appeared to Macaulay's opponents; he does not proceed however to justify it as a judicial act, but to argue that it is not open to those who approve of the Revolution to condemn it. He thus avoids the difficult task of maintaining the legality of the court which tried Charles. On Jan. 4, 1649 'the Commons declared that the people was under God the source of all just power, and that the House of Commons, being chosen by the people, formed the supreme power in England, having no need of either king or House of Lords. Never was constitutional pedantry carried further than when this declaration was issued by a mere fragment of a House which, even if all its members had been present, could only claim to have represented the people some years before. On Jan. 9 a special High Court of Justice was constituted by the House of Commons alone, for the trial of the king. Of the 135 members named, only 67 were present when the trial began.' (Gardiner.) See also p. 44, lines 9—12.

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6. *Jefferies*, James II.'s Chancellor and the best known of his ministers.

10. *pretty near to regicide*: the strict principle of passive obedience would doubtless forbid armed resistance to the king in any circumstances; it is however easy to draw distinctions between the conduct of those who kept Charles in captivity and executed him, and those who, after allowing James to escape to France, felt bound to take up arms against him when he appeared in Ireland at the head of a French army.

17. *imprisoned him*: James II. fled from London on Dec. 11, 1688, but was prevented from sailing for France by some fishermen at Sheerness, and returned on Dec. 16 to Whitehall, which William surrounded with Dutch troops on the 17th; shortly after midnight three peers insisted on entering his bedchamber with the message that William would shortly reach Westminster

and that the King would do well to set out for Ham before 10 o'clock.

26—30. There were formerly annexed to the Book of Common Prayer (i) 'A Form of Prayer with Thanksgiving to be used yearly upon the vth day of November; For the happy Deliverance of King James I. and the three estates of England from the most traitorous and bloody-intended Massacre by Gunpowder: And also for the happy Arrival of His Majesty King William on this Day, for the Deliverance of our Church and Nation'; (ii) 'A Form of Prayer with Fasting to be used yearly upon the xxxth Day of January, Being the Day of the Martyrdom of the Blessed King Charles the First'; (iii) A Form of Prayer with Thanksgiving for May 29 in memory of the Restoration. In 1859 the use of these forms was discontinued in accordance with an address of Parliament to the Queen.

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7. *The Presbyterians*: it will be well at this point to distinguish between several religious party-names:—the general name of *Puritan* was given to the party which under Elizabeth was for the most part willing to acquiesce in the government of the Church by bishops, if only they could be allowed to omit certain ceremonies which they regarded as superstitious. The bishops' oppressive enforcement of the observances of these ceremonies led the Puritans to demand a change in church government, and the majority of the Puritans in the Long Parliament were *Presbyterians*, i.e. they held that the Church ought to be governed by a synod or assembly of the *presbyters* or ministers. In the Grand Remonstrance (1641) they declared that it was far from their purpose to leave private persons or particular congregations to take up what form of divine service they pleased, and many found their rule no less oppressive than that of the bishops; Milton for instance in his poem *On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament* declares 'New *Presbyter* is but old *Priest* writ large.' Those among the Puritans who were bent on securing individual liberty in religion formed the party of the *Independents*, holding that each congregation should be an independent and self-governing religious commonwealth. Though far inferior to the Presbyterians in

number, they gradually gained power through the capacity of Cromwell and others among their leaders, and through their strength in the army; and the more advanced spirits, who were responsible for such measures as the execution of Charles, were chiefly to be found in their ranks. There were many other sects on the Puritan side, such as the *Quakers* and the *Fifth-Monarchy-men* (see p. 39 line 16 and notes).

19. *wishing to change that opinion*: the reference is to Milton's *Defensio Populi Anglicani*; see note on p. 3 line 16. Salmasius replied in 1652 in his *Regii Sanguinis Clamor* (The Cry of the Royal Blood to Heaven against the English Parricides), published anonymously. Milton, thinking it the work not of Salmasius, but of Alexander Morus, answered in his *Defensio Secunda* (1654), a bitter attack on Salmasius and Morus. Morus then published his *Public Testimony against the Calumnies of John Milton*, to which Milton replied in 1655 in his *Pro Se Defensio* (Self-Defence). See note on p. 28 line 27.

30. *word-catchers*: Salmasius' European fame as a classical scholar and a writer of elegant Latin gave him in those days more weight in controversy than if he had been an important statesman.

32. *Aeneae magni dextra* 'the right hand of great Aeneas,' from Virgil *Aeneid* x. 830, where Aeneas, having reluctantly slain the young warrior Lausus, who was defending his father Mezentius, says 'yet thus, unhappy youth, shalt thou ease the pang of death: 'tis by the hand of great Aeneas that thou fallest.'

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8. *enemies of Milton*: for instance Johnson, who tauntingly says that 'Milton, having now tasted the honey of publick employment, would not return to hunger and philosophy.' (*Life of Milton*.)

19. *secessions and expulsions*: the chief secession from the Long Parliament was that of the Royalists at the outbreak of the Civil War (1642), the chief expulsion that known as Pride's Purge (1648), when the army excluded 96 Presbyterian members, leaving only 50 or 60 Independents out of a House originally consisting of about 500 members. This remnant of the House, which was often called the Rump, in 1649 voted the abolition

of the House of Lords. Cromwell dared not summon a freely elected parliament, as all knew that it would restore the monarchy, but in 1653 he wished the Rump to draw up a scheme for the election of a new House, guarding against this danger, and then to dissolve. Learning that they were passing a bill providing that they should sit in the new House without fresh election, and should have power to reject any new member of whom they did not approve, he dissolved them by force.

22. *Venetian oligarchy*: the Great Council, the legislative body of Venice, was from 1297 limited to members of the great noble families whose names were inscribed in the famous Golden Book.

25. *far more perfect*: by this Macaulay probably meant much nearer the English constitution as it was developed in the XVIIIth century. He refers to the Instrument of Government, drawn up by Cromwell's supporters in 1653. It gave him the title of Lord Protector; he was to have a fixed revenue for the ordinary expenses of government, but to come to Parliament for extraordinary needs; to appoint officials and to carry on the government with the advice of a Council of State, which he could not dismiss. For other provisions see lines 28—35.

27. *representative system*: there was to be a single House, consisting of 400 members for England and Wales, 30 for Scotland, and 30 for Ireland; seats were taken from small hamlets, and given to populous towns and counties.

31. *stadtholder*: each of the Seven United Provinces of the Netherlands had a chief magistrate named stadtholder or rather stadholder. His powers were limited. The office of stadholder of the province of Holland had come to be almost hereditary in the house of the Princes of Orange, who often held the office in the other provinces also. The difficulty of inducing the seven provinces to act in unison further limited the stadholder's powers. In the United States also each state is a separate republic for local affairs, but the *President* is the head of the Federation and is charged with the executive government.

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4. *Washington*: George Washington, the great statesman of the United States in their struggle for independence. He was

appointed in 1775 general of the American army, and in 1789 the first President of the United States.

*Bolívar*, the leader of the South American colonies of Spain in securing independence (see note on p. 33 line 26). He was at this time dictator of the republic which was named in his honour Bolivia, and in 1828 he became president of the republic of Colombia. He is styled 'the Liberator of South America.'

8. *his parliaments*: the assembly of persons nominated by Cromwell and the officers of the army in 1653, and usually called Barebones' Parliament (from the name of one of its members) has no title to be called a Parliament. Setting this aside, we have:

(1) The First Parliament (1654) elected under the Instrument of Government; it sat nearly 5 months. As however it questioned the authority of the Instrument, and persisted in drawing up a new constitution, Cromwell dissolved it, and governed the country by means of the Major-Generals (see p. 39 line 11).

(2) The Second Parliament, called in 1656 to provide funds for the war against Spain. When it met, Cromwell excluded about 100 members who were likely to oppose him. The House drew up the Humble Petition and Advice (1657), which offered Cromwell the title of king, and among other alterations, created an upper House which was to revise the decisions of the Commons. Cromwell refused the title of king, but accepted the rest of this new constitution.

(3) The Third Parliament (1658) elected under the Humble Petition and Advice. The House of Commons quarrelled with the new upper House, and Cromwell was obliged to dissolve Parliament.

13—35. The commendation of Cromwell's government in this and the preceding paragraph would probably at present meet with general assent; it is now recognised however that Cromwell was not a framer of perfect constitutions, but rather a man of intensely conservative nature, who was most unwilling to innovate until he was compelled by the difficulties of the position.

31. *religious liberty*: at the beginning of the Protectorate

'religious worship was established; but there was to be no enquiry whether the ministers were Presbyterians, Independents or anything else, provided they were Puritans. There was to be complete toleration of other Puritan congregations not belonging to the established churches; whilst the Episcopalians, though not legally tolerated, were as yet frequently allowed to meet privately.' (Gardiner.) In 1655, however, even their private worship was suppressed.

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6. *had he lived*: we now reach a weak point in the argument. Macaulay is about to extol the statesmanship of the Puritan party (p. 52, lines 18—26); yet he tells us that the death of a single Puritan 'dissolved the whole frame of society' (p. 47, line 16), and was succeeded by 'the darkest and most disgraceful years in the English annals.' Cromwell had failed to get his Parliamentary assemblies into practical working, though we may admit that he earnestly desired a constitutional government, provided that it was in Puritan hands; and it is hard to see what prospect there was of better success, if he had lived a few years longer. At his death the alternatives were a second Oliver Cromwell (and the Puritans failed to produce one), or the Restoration.

20. *revenged on the Independents*, for excluding them from power by Pride's Purge (see note on p. 45 line 19).

25. The Restoration was, like the triumph of the Long Parliament, the free act of a nation which had suffered from years of despotism. The same excuse therefore may be pleaded for its evils: 'At times Liberty takes the form of a hateful reptile: she grovels, she hisses, she stings' (p. 41 line 21—2).

30. *his rival*, Louis XIV, King of France 1643—1715. By the secret Treaty of Dover (1670) Charles II. agreed to join Louis in a war against the Dutch, and at a fitting opportunity to acknowledge himself a Roman Catholic; when he did so, he was to receive a large pension from Louis and the aid of French troops, if his subjects opposed his change of religion. In 1675 Louis, afraid that Charles would be driven by Parliament to join the alliance against France, granted him a pension of £100,000

a year to make him independent of his subjects, and Charles was enabled to prorogue Parliament for 15 months.

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2. *Anathema Maranatha*: *anathēma* is a Greek word meaning an accursed thing; *maran atha* in Hebrew means *our Lord cometh*, and in 1 *Corinthians* xvi. 22 it was formerly regarded as an expression merely strengthening *anathema*, being used in much the same sense as *Amen*; in this sense it is employed by Macaulay. It is really to be read as a separate sentence: 'Let him be anathema. Our Lord cometh.'

4. Charles II. is compared to Milton's Belial (*Par. Lost* II. 110—118):

A fairer person lost not Heaven; he seemed  
For dignity composed, and high exploit.  
But all was false and hollow; though his tongue  
Dropt manna, and could make the worse appear  
The better reason, to perplex and dash  
Maturest counsels: for his thoughts were low;  
To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds  
Timorous and slothful.

James II. is compared to Moloch (*Par. Lost* II. 44—5):

The strongest and the fiercest Spirit  
That fought in Heaven, now fiercer by despair.

10. Compare *Psalms* xlv. 14.

31. *inaugurated*: as Lord Protector.

32. *hanged at Tyburn*: at the Restoration the body of Cromwell was dug up from its grave in Westminster Abbey and hanged on a gallows at Tyburn.

33. *dined on calves' heads*: this was a manner of expressing satisfaction at the beheading of Charles I.; *oak-branches* were stuck up, especially on May 29, in memory of Charles II.'s concealment from the Roundhead soldiers in an oak-tree at Boscobel after the battle of Worcester.

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17. *satirists* such as Samuel Butler, author of *Hudibras* (1663); *dramatists* such as Dryden (see note on p. 12 line 22).

28—31. 'Behold the fountain of laughter, and behold the

stream which holds within it deadly perils; now here it becomes us to rein in our desire and to be very wary'—a quotation from Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Canto xv.: in these words two of Rinaldo's comrades, who are about to rescue him from the enchantress Armida, are warned of the dangers of the River of Laughter, whose waters at first give joyousness to him who drinks, but finally kill him with excessive laughter.

34. *unpromising materials*: at the beginning of the Civil War the army consisted of poor material, and Cromwell was dissatisfied with it: 'your troops are most of them old decayed serving men and tapsters, and such kind of fellows'; but the material which he employed in his own regiment and in the 'New Model,' consisting largely of stern Puritan farmers, was excellent. Of its later exploits Macaulay tells us that 'the banished Cavaliers felt an emotion of national pride when they saw a brigade of their countrymen, outnumbered by foes and abandoned by friends, drive before it in headlong rout the finest infantry of Spain, and force a passage into a counterscarp which had just been pronounced impregnable by the ablest of the Marshals of France.' (*History* ch. i.) 'Terrible to every nation' (p. 50 line 4) is, it will be understood, a rhetorical exaggeration.

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14. *Bassanio*: in the *Merchant of Venice* (II. vii. and ix., III. ii.) Portia's suitors have to choose one of three caskets. The Prince of Morocco chooses the golden casket and finds a picture of a death's head; the Prince of Arragon finds in the silver casket a picture of a fool's head; Bassanio finds in the leaden casket Portia's portrait and the promise of her hand.

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21. *destined*: according to the Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination, the characteristic doctrine of the Puritans, God had before the creation of the world predestined the elect to salvation, and other men to damnation.

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8. *Beatific Vision*: the vision of God, reserved as a reward for the blessed in Heaven.



10. *Vane*: Sir Harry Vane the younger; he took a leading part in negotiating the alliance between the Parliament and the Scotch (1643), and shewed himself an able administrator under the Commonwealth. He was estranged from Cromwell by his dissolution of the Rump (1653), was an active member of the restored Rump (1659), and prominent in the negotiations between it and the army. It was reported that the Fifth-Monarchy men had elected him as their king. He was executed for treason in 1662. His mystical religious writings were almost unintelligible even to his contemporaries.

11. *Fleetwood* did Cromwell good service at the battles of Dunbar and Worcester; in 1652 he married Cromwell's daughter and was appointed Commander-in-chief in Ireland, and subsequently Lord Deputy (1654—7). He was spared at the Restoration, as he was not a regicide, and died in 1692.

### Page 53.

1. *Talus*: the vth Book of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* contains the legend of Sir Artegal, the champion of justice, to whom the goddess Astraea has given as page an iron monster named Talus,

Who in his hand an yron flaele did hould

With which he thresht out falshood, and did truth unfould.

15. *anchorites*: an anchorite is one who has retired from the world (Greek *ἀναχωρεῖν*, to retire).

16. *Dunstons*: Dunstan (Archbishop of Canterbury, 959—88) here stands as the type of an anchorite on account of the marvellous stories of his austerities and his encounters with the devil. He is now seen to have been a great statesman, to whose wisdom the prosperity of the reigns of Edred and Edgar was largely due.

*De Montforts*: Simon de Montfort, father of the hero of Lewes and Evesham, was a Norman noble and one of the leaders of an army which in 1209—12 carried on a pitiless crusade against the Albigenes or Waldenses, who were then very numerous in the south of France (see note p. 30 line 3). Compare Cromwell's crusade in Ireland (1649).

*Dominics*: St Dominic, a Spaniard, who in 1215 founded the Order of Friars Preachers or Dominicans; the object to

which he devoted himself and his Order was the suppression of heresy by preaching and by sterner measures. In 1231 the Pope placed the Inquisition in the hands of the Dominicans.

17. *Escobars*: a Spanish Jesuit and writer on casuistry. His *Theologia Moralis*, published in 1646, was extremely popular in the XVIIth century.

25. *the Heathens*: as Macaulay found it difficult to identify them (lines 33—5), it is hazardous to mention names. Among those however who shewed a strong love of freedom, and a regard for the political models of classical antiquity rather than religious zeal, we may mention Algernon Sidney, executed on the charge of complicity in a Whig plot in 1683, the poet Andrew Marvell, Milton's assistant as Latin Secretary and a member of the House of Commons after the Restoration, and James Harrington, author of *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), a description of an ideal English commonwealth.

30. *Plutarch*, a Greek writer of the first century A.D. His *Parallel Lives* was well known in England from North's translation, which was used by Shakespeare. In the *Parallel Lives* the biography of a famous Greek is followed by that of a famous Roman by way of contrast;—for instance that of Alexander the Great by that of Julius Caesar.

32. *the Brissotines*, so called from their leader J. P. Brissot; otherwise called Girondists, because many of its leaders came from the Gironde. They gained the support of many moderate members of the Legislative Assembly in their opposition to the more violent Jacobins. They did not desire the execution of the king, although they were constrained to vote for it. They pressed on the war against England (1793), but in the same year were overthrown by the Jacobins, and their leaders guillotined.

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8. *Whitefriars*, also called Alsatia, near the Temple, in London; it was the site of the house of the Carmelites or White Friars, which before the Reformation had been a sanctuary for criminals; it still (until 1697) protected debtors from arrest, and consequently had become the resort of the dissolute and lawless.

19. *Janissaries*, a body of foot-guards in the service of the

Sultan of Turkey, first organised about 1330, and suppressed in 1826, because they had become dangerous on account of their power and their jealousy of the remainder of the army. The word means in Turkish 'new soldiers.' They were largely recruited from prisoners taken in war and from the Christian subjects of the Sultan.

31. *Duessa*, in the *Faerie Queene* (1. ii.—viii.), is a false sorceress who assumes the shape of the faithful *Fidessa*, and so beguiles the Red-Cross knight to defend her. *Duessa* (= duplicity, from *duo*) represents allegorically Mary, Queen of Scots.

### Page 55.

9. *Round Table*, the table of King Arthur and his company of Knights.

21. *conventicle*, a Nonconformist place of worship; *Gothic cloister*: see *Il Penseroso* 155—66; *Christmas revel*: in *L'Allegro* 91—128 festivities are described, and the *Ode on the Nativity* shews that in his youth Milton was not opposed to the religious observance of Christmas. All these poems however were written before the crisis of the Puritan cause.

28. *As ever*: quoted from *Sonnet* 11.: 'On his having arrived at the age of 23.'

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14. *hero of Homer*, Odysseus (*Latin*, Ulysses), the hero of the *Odyssey*, stopped the ears of his crew and tied himself to the mast; he was thus able to enjoy the entrancing song of the Syrens without being allured by them to his destruction. *Circe*, the daughter of the Sun, had a magic drink which turned men into swine: 'of swine they had the head and voice and bristles and shape, but their mind was unchanged as beforetime' (*Odyssey* x. 239). Cp. *Comus* 68—77 (quoted on p. 95).

24. *treatises on Prelacy*: (1) *Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England*, in which he says that political and religious reform has been hindered in England because 'the Bishop's foot has been in it'; (2) *On Prelatical Episcopacy*, in reply to a defence of a modified episcopacy by Archbishop Usher; (3) *Animadversions upon the Remonstrant's Defence against Smectymnus*, a reply to a book of Bishop Hall's replying

to *Smectymnuus* (a controversial work against episcopacy, its title being formed by putting together the initials of its five authors); (4) *The Reason of Church-government urged against Prelacy*, in which he maintains that Prelacy 'opposeth the reason and end of the Gospel,' and appears to lean to Presbyterianism;—all these four pamphlets were published in 1641; (5) in 1642 he published a pamphlet the title of which may be briefly given as an *Apology for Smectymnuus*.

*exquisite lines*: the well-known passage, *Il Penseroso* 155—66, beginning:

But let my due feet never fail  
To walk the studious cloister's pale.

31—4. See *Othello* v. ii.

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21. *malignants*: a name which the Parliamentarians applied to the Royalists.

22. *his own poem*: *Comus*. See note on p. 16 line 26.

### Page 58.

1—2. *joined the Presbyterians...forsook them*: compare the notes on p. 56 line 24 and on p. 44 line 7.

7. *called upon Cromwell*: in *Sonnet XVI.* (1652). *Secular chain*: the state's interference with the religious liberty of the individual.

10. *that sublime treatise*: *Areopagitica* (1644). The Long Parliament had begun to insist more strictly on the licensing of all publications, and the press was brought under the strict control of Presbyterian censors. There had been some prospect of Milton's being called to account for publishing his first tract on divorce (see p. 59 line 3) without license. The *Areopagitica* is a noble defence of the freedom of the press; it was addressed to the Long Parliament.

11, 12. Here Macaulay uses the words of *Deuteronomy* vi. 8.

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3. *divorce*: his tracts on divorce were (1) the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643), (2) the *Judgment of Bucer concerning*

*Divorce* (1644); (3) *Tetrachordon*, 'expositions of four chief passages in scripture which treat of marriage'; (4) *Colasterion* (1645). See note on p. 3 line 6. For his writings on regicide, see note on p. 44 line 19.

4. *education*: the *Tract on Education* is addressed to a German named Hartlib, who was introducing in London Comenius' methods of teaching. Milton draws out a scheme of liberal education,—'that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war.' The scheme includes, besides literature, agriculture, physical science, medicine, theology, music, and martial exercises, and the importance of travel is insisted on, the whole being designed for the culture of the leisured classes.

6, 7. A quotation from Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II. 72, where the sun-god, explaining the difficulties of his course to his venturesome son Phaethon, says 'I urge my course against resistance; nor does the force which overcomes all else, overcome me, and I speed in a contrary direction to the swiftly moving sphere.'

14. *Burke*, Edmund Burke entered the House of Commons in 1765. His most famous speeches are those in favour of a conciliatory treatment of the American Colonies and those delivered in the impeachment of Warren Hastings. 'Sink into insignificance' is one of Macaulay's exaggerated criticisms.

21—2. The quotation is from the *Reason of Church-government*. See note on p. 56, line 24.

26. *the Iconoclast*: after the execution of Charles I. the *Icon Basilike* (= 'The Royal Image') was published, being a book of prayers and meditations, purporting to be written by the king. It had such an effect in increasing the horror caused by the king's execution, that Milton wrote an answer called *Iconoclastes* (= 'The Image-breaker').

34. *this relic*, the *Treatise on Christian Doctrine*.

### Page 60.

8—13. This description of Milton in his last years is partly taken from an account by a clergyman who had visited him, recorded in Richardson's *Notes on Milton*.

21. *Elwood*: see note on p. 17 line 27. It is said that Milton required his daughters to read to him books in foreign languages of which they did not understand the meaning, and that they found the task very irksome.

31. *Boswellism*: Macaulay, while admitting that Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* is the best of all biographies, had a curious contempt for Boswell's unbounded admiration of Johnson and his minute observation of Johnson's manners of life. See his review of Croker's edition of Boswell's *Life*.

### Page 61.

7. *the Virgin Martyr*: in this tragedy (printed in 1622) Massinger makes the Virgin Martyr (St Dorothea, one of the martyrs of Diocletian's persecution 300 A.D.) speak on the scaffold of the fruit and flowers of Paradise. Theophilus, one of her persecutors, ironically begs for 'some small pittance of that curious fruit you boast of,' and afterwards, when he is seated in his study, a good spirit named Angelo brings him a basket of it.

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